

Teaching Through Devotion: The Poetics of Yaśaskara's *Devīstotra* and Premodern Kashmir

By
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Abstract

The *Devīstotra* of Yaśaskara (c. 12th to 17th centuries CE), is a little studied and heretofore untranslated Sanskrit text from Kashmir. This thesis not only provides the first English translation and close reading of selections from the text, it uses the *Devīstotra* along with current research on its literary, cultural, and political contexts to illustrate the functions of the text and its intended audiences, and to provide a case study with which to evaluate the wide range and flexibility of the genre of *stotra* (a hymn or poem of praise) in Sanskrit literature. The *Devīstotra* is a unique example of a text that has both a religious dimension (offering praise to the Goddess Pārvatī) and a literary-critical dimension (giving verse examples that elucidate Sanskrit poetic ornaments or *alaṃkāras*). With regard to the latter, the text follows the structure of the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* of Śobhākaramitra (c. 12th century CE), one of the last major works on Sanskrit poetics to be distributed and studied outside of Kashmir. A later editor, Ratnakaṇṭha (17th century CE) may have added definitions of *alaṃkāras* and prose explanations from the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* into the *Devīstotra* (if they were not present already), which arguably helped to popularize and preserve the poetics of Śobhākaramitra's text. Lastly, the *Devīstotra*, and the *stotra* genre more broadly, serves as a distinct and important textual vehicle in the preservation of the Sanskrit language and its knowledge systems during times of widespread social and political upheaval in Kashmir and the Indian subcontinent leading up to modernity. Ultimately, *stotras* served as a vehicle of creativity, innovation, and preservation in later Sanskrit literature. The *Devīstotra* itself illustrates the close link between devotional literature and pedagogy in Sanskrit.

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For my grandmother,

Jeanne Gabert

I. Introduction

Although largely unknown in the Western world before the modern era, the traditions of Sanskrit poetry and the study of poetics are easily among the oldest and most well-developed in world literature. Sanskrit poetry, known as *kāvya*, marks a break from the poems, hymns, and stories of the Vedic period and the early epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* (although it finds much of its source material from the epics especially), and finds its first extant expressions in the poetry of Aśvaghōṣa (2nd century CE), Kālidāsa (4th century CE), and Bhāravi (later 4th and 5th centuries CE). This early flowering of poetry was followed by a detailed analytical discussion of Sanskrit poetics and aesthetics, known as *alaṃkāraśāstra*. *Śāstras* are different sciences and disciplines within Sanskrit, which can include anything from poetics to philosophy, ritual, or the study of law (*dharmaśāstra*) for example. The term *alaṃkāra* is an important one for this paper, and it comes from the verb *alaṃkr*, which means to prepare or to ornament. *Alaṃkāras* are poetic “ornaments” or devices, the study of which can be traced back to Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyaḥalaṃkāra* and Daṇḍin’s *Kāvyaḍarśa* from the 6th-7th centuries CE.¹ As the discipline evolved, it expanded to include discussions of a work’s emotional flavor (*rasa*), the power of suggestion (*dhvani*) over denotation in poetic language, and numerous other subjects. However, even later influential works such as Maṃmaṭa’s *Kāvyaḥprakāśa* (late 10th century CE) and Appayya Dīkṣita’s *Citramīmāṃsā* (16th century CE) devote significant space to the discussion of *alaṃkāras*. Over time, these poetic theorists’ discussions, and the poetry of classical poets themselves influenced and enriched one another. Notable authors such as Ānandavardhana (9th century CE), Abhinavagupta (c. 1100 CE), and Appayya Dīkṣita wrote as

¹ For a summary and discussion of these figures and the discipline of poetics, see Yigal Bronner, “Sanskrit Poetics.” *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed., (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012).

both poet and theorist, and even blurred the boundaries of genre in composing poems with *śāstra*-like qualities to them. One of the genres of poetry in which they did this was the *stotra* (or *stava*, both words coming from the root \sqrt{stu} —to praise), which in a basic sense is a lyric poem or hymn of praise, largely in religious contexts.

Within Sanskrit poetry, the genre of *stotra* literature has long been a popular, adaptable, and innovative part, and up until very recently it has been curiously understudied. This is due to any number of reasons, but one important fact is that it has been difficult to formulate a clear and concise definition explaining what exactly constitutes a *stotra*. In many instances, the flexibility and vast range of *stotras* can be to blame for this, however thanks to the work of Yigal Bronner, Hamsa Stainton, and others, there are clear and well-thought working definitions available.² One example within the genre that helps to illustrate some of its range and flexibility is the *Devīstotra* of Yaśaskara, a Kashmirian Sanskrit text composed sometime between the 12th and 17th centuries CE and heretofore unstudied in any significant detail. The *Devīstotra* (“Hymn to the Goddess”—abbreviated hereafter as *DS*) is a unique piece of literature that combines succinct Hindu devotional verses to the Goddess (in the form of Pārvatī, the wife of Śiva and daughter of Himālaya) with definitions of poetic ornaments (*sūtras*) and explanatory pieces of text (*vṛtti*) found in the *Alaṃkāratnākara* (“Mine of Poetic Tropes”—hereafter *ARĀ*), a 12th-century text on Sanskrit poetics authored by Śobhākaramitra, one of the last Kashmiri poetic theorists whose work was widely disseminated throughout the Indian subcontinent. Although Yaśaskara was clearly indebted to and influenced by Śobhākaramitra’s work, a later editor named Ratnakaṇṭha

² “We can say that *stotras* are relatively short works in verse, whose stanzas directly and repeatedly address a divinity in the vocative case. Furthermore, *stotras* are not divided into chapters or sections and tend to consist of a round or auspicious number of verses (e.g., 8, 16, 50, 100).” Yigal Bronner, “Singing to God, Educating the People: Appayya Dīkṣita and the Function of *Stotras*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127 no. 2 (2007): 114. See also, Hamsa Stainton, “*Stotra* Literature: An Overview,” in “Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir” (unpublished book manuscript, University of Kansas, 2017).

(c. 17th century; a poet, author of *stotras*, and commentator), may have embedded the aphorisms and explanations of the *ARĀ* within Yaśaskara's text. One of my main objectives in this thesis is to provide a translation and close reading of significant portions of the *Devīstotra*, paying attention to its dual nature as a devotional and pedagogical text and bringing the unique qualities of the text itself and the *stotra* genre to light. My second goal is to illustrate the significance of the *DS* and to hypothesize why texts like it potentially helped to popularize Sanskrit poetry and poetics and perpetuate Sanskrit literature, literary theory, and innovation during highly unstable times between the era of the classical poets and theorists mentioned above and modernity. To do this I will examine the literary, religious, and historical contexts of the *DS* in Kashmir, the nature, functions, and audiences of the *DS* and *stotras* more broadly, and the political and cultural changes that impacted the preservation of the Sanskrit language and its systems of knowledge in late premodern times. Ultimately, this leads me to reinterpret how we understand the decline of Sanskrit language and literature in Kashmir in the centuries leading up to modernity.

This thesis begins with a discussion of the *Devīstotra*, and to some extent the *Alaṃkāraśāstra*, as a physical text (i.e., what the most recent Sanskrit editions are based on, what manuscripts are available, etc.), and a discussion of those involved in creating and preserving these two texts. Following this, I provide a close reading of significant portions of the *Devīstotra* itself with Sanskrit transliterations and English translations of numerous parts of the text. I also provide analysis and translation of the *ARĀ* and other relevant texts when necessary, as they provide important contextual information and details that help to grant a more complete perspective on the poetry of Yaśaskara. I then outline and discuss a few noteworthy Sanskrit precursors to Yaśaskara's poem which include both devotional and pedagogical texts and

authors, and examine the *DS* in light of these contexts. Lastly, in examining the historical, cultural, and political contexts in Kashmir around the time of Yaśaskara, and in engaging with the most recent scholarship on *stotra* literature and on Sanskrit from the turn of the millennium to the present, I seek to understand the place of the *DS* in the history of Sanskrit literature and the prevalence of *stotras* in Kashmir during this period. The scholarship of Yigal Bronner, Sheldon Pollock, David Buchta, Hamsa Stainton, and Daniel H. H. Ingalls in particular was indispensable for this work. Also, without the work of K.P. Dube and C.R. Devadhar I would not have had access to the Sanskrit texts of the *Devīstotra* and *Alaṃkāratnākara* that we possess today. In my readings, I have found that the *Devīstotra* is a unique, multivalent, and rewarding text, and that the poetry of Yaśaskara is much more than rote devotional versification and the reinscription of prior poetic tropes and *alaṃkāras*. Along with many other *stotras*, some of which have rightly received greater attention and notoriety, the *Devīstotra* speaks to the vitality and energy of Sanskrit literature in Kashmir during times of instability, dramatic change, and uncertainty.

II. The *Devīstotra*: What We Know about the Text and Its Author

A. Background

My translation and analysis of the *Devīstotra* is drawn from the edition published by Dr. Kālī Prasāda Dube in Varanasi in 2001. Dube cites two manuscripts (named “क” 38—1875-6 and “ख” 91—1882-3, respectively) residing at the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune, Maharashtra as the sources for his volume. In the editor’s note to the text (in Sanskrit), he mentions that the readings of the former manuscript are of better quality than the latter (presumably it is less erroneous), but overall the manuscripts are in workable condition. It is unclear exactly how old the manuscripts themselves are, as the 19th century dates above refer to the dates the manuscripts were collected for preservation, not their age of composition.

Although excerpts of it appear in Dube’s edition of the *Devīstotra* (*DS*), the independent *Alaṃkāraśāstrānākara* (*ARĀ*) text of Śobhākaramitra used in my translations is that edited by C.R. Devadhar published by the Oriental Book Agency of Pune in 1942. Devadhar based his text largely on a single manuscript from the Bhandarkar Institute (227—1875-76), which as he acknowledges has its hazards. He notes that despite his best work the text is corrupted and mutilated in many places. However, it is noteworthy that two of the manuscripts which he used to mitigate some of these errors in the *sūtra* and *vṛtti* portions of the text were none other than the *DS* manuscripts mentioned above. It is clear from this, and will become more so in following discussions, that the *DS* and *ARĀ* have shared a long and intertwined history both as literary creations and as textual documents.

Dube’s edition of the *Devīstotra* combines the verses of Yaśaskara and selections from Śobhākaramitra’s *ARĀ*. According to Dube, the editing and combining of these two texts was originally done by Ratnakaṇṭha, a Kashmirian poet and commentator from the 17th century CE.

The *sūtras* are short aphoristic definitions of certain poetic ornaments in the *ARĀ*, and are used as headings for new sections of text. The *vr̥ttis* are longer prose explanations and discussions of the above definitions which can also include example verses from classical poetry and numerous other sources to illustrate certain points. The *vr̥tti* sections in the *ARĀ* can be quite long, and Ratnakaṇṭha excerpted certain helpful parts of these sections and included them in the *DS*. Sheldon Pollock mentions that the *ARĀ* was the last major work of Sanskrit poetics to be circulated outside of Kashmir and this occurred from roughly the end of the 12th century CE onward.³ In his note at the beginning of the *DS*, Dube also places Śobhākaramitra in the 12th century Vikram Samvat (an Indian calendar system which is roughly 57 years ahead of the Common Era system) which correlates approximately to Pollock's dating. Dube also mentions Ratnakaṇṭha as the author of a commentary of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa's *Stutikusumāñjali* in the year 1738 V.S., which correlates to about 1681 CE.⁴ In the broad space of four to five hundred years between these two dates we can place the life and writing of Yaśaskara, but unfortunately there is no specific information available to give more precise dates than this. The colophon at the end of the *DS*, however, does provide some information about who Yaśaskara was, his relationship to the Goddess, and where he was from. It is written in the third person, and was possibly added by Ratnakaṇṭha or another later writer. It is as follows:

Where the Goddess blessed the Pradyumna Hill with the form of Śarikā,
where the river of the Goddess of Destruction and the river arising from the eyes of the
boar meet,
where the king named Pravara went in bodily form to Mount Kailasa,
in that city the poet Yaśaskara praised Pārvatī.
Here in the beautiful *Devīstotra*, the *sūtras* of Śobhākara have been mixed in by
Ratnakaṇṭha.

³ Sheldon Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 396.

⁴ Kālī Prasāda Dube, ed., *Devīstotra*, by Yaśaskara, (Varanasi: Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, 2001), 1.

This concludes the *Devīstotra*, a composition of illustrations of [ornaments in] the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* written by the poet Yaśaskara who lived in the Kashmir country.⁵

The city where the two rivers meet is Śrīnagar, still today one of the central cities of Kashmir, and an important political, religious, and literary center even as early as the time of Śobhākaramitra. Thus, even though Yaśaskara is an enigma, we can place him in Kashmir, between the 12th and 17th centuries CE.

B. Brief Outline and Structure of the *Devīstotra* Text

The overall form of the text edited by Dr. Dube and put together by Ratnakaṇṭha has a relatively clear and straightforward structure, but it also raises a few questions that need to be explored further. The text is split into 107 sections, rather than 108, a highly common and auspicious number in Hinduism (i.e., there are traditionally 108 *Upaniṣads*, and so on). I think this can be explained by a minor difference in numbering between the *DS* and the *ARĀ*. The *alaṃkāra* named *Viṣama* (“incongruity,” or an unusual or incompatible relationship between two things) is split into two sections (59 and 60) in the *ARĀ*, whereas it is only one section (59) in the *DS*. The numbering of the text may also be corrupted somehow. Each of the sections are labeled with the name of the *alaṃkāra* elucidated in the *ARĀ*. Below the title of each section, the *sūtras* from Śobhākaramitra’s text are given, and although there are some notable exceptions they are usually an exact copy of what is found in C.R. Devadhar’s edition of the *ARĀ*. This is also true of the *ṛttis* that follow the *sūtras* in many but not all sections. What follows afterward is Yaśaskara’s verses either about or addressed directly to the Goddess, which incorporate the *alaṃkāra* under discussion. Overall there are 131 verses composed by Yaśaskara to illustrate 107 *alaṃkāras*, so there are notable places where he has composed multiple verses under the heading

⁵ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 32.

of one *alaṃkāra*. Occasionally following Yaśaskara's verses are one or two brief verses from the *ARĀ* that may further elucidate the prior *alaṃkāra* or help differentiate the prior section(s) from what follows. These verses are titled *parikaraśloka* (a following or supporting verse), and *saṅgrahaśloka* (a summary verse) and may have been placed in the text under Ratnakaṇṭha's editorship. With some minor differences in places, these verses are found largely intact in the *ARĀ* in the corresponding sections. In the *ARĀ* it is unclear if Śobhākaramitra composed these verses himself or if he was simply looking back to prior texts on poetics for material to strengthen certain claims and clarify his explanations. In terms of the length of both texts, there are 107 sections in the *Devīstotra* as previously mentioned, but there are 112 sections in the *ARĀ*. It is not clear why Yaśaskara did not compose verses for the final few *alaṃkāra* sections in the *ARĀ*, however, he clearly follows the order of the *alaṃkāras* discussed in Śobhākaramitra's text. To the best of my knowledge, I do not think there is a "hidden" 108th verse or section in the *DS* like that described in Daniel H. H. Ingalls' study of Ānandavardhana's *Devīśataka*. It is clear from Ingalls' study that Ānandavardhana's poem is a work of *citrakāvya* (flashy or virtuosic poetry in general, or "picture poetry" built around intricate images drawn from the arrangements of syllables called *citrabandhas*), even if it seems to go against the central thrust of his literary theory found in the *Dhvanyāloka*.⁶ There are two reasons that I believe there is no hidden verse and that 107 is the correct number. The first is that I think the breaking of the *DS* into 107 sections and the addition of the *sūtra* and *vṛtti* portions were done later by Ratnakaṇṭha. Secondly, the 131 total verses in the *DS* fit quite succinctly with the 107 *alaṃkāras* discussed, and as far as I can tell there is no alternative scheme as to why the verses are arranged as they

⁶ "It is well known that in the *Dhvanyāloka* Ānanda is very harsh in his criticism of verbal tricks and figures of speech which lack suggestion (*dhvani*) or emotional content (*rasa*). Such works are relegated to the category of *citra*." Daniel H. H. Ingalls, "Ānandavardhana's *Devīśataka*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no.4 (1989): 565-66.

are. For some *alaṃkāras* Yaśaskara only composed one verse, and for others he may have composed two or three, and I think it was simply his choice as an author to do so. Following Śobhākaramitra, Yaśaskara devotes the sixth section of his work to the *Citra alaṃkāra* explained above, but this is the only place where he discusses it in the *DS*. My close reading of important passages in the *DS* follows the order of the 107 sections of the text, and draws on Śobhākaramitra's work and other contexts as needed.

C. The *Devīstotra*: A Close Reading and Analysis

The *Devīstotra* begins with a benediction to Ganeśa, Sarasvatī, and Pārvatī herself. What is notable is the last clause, in which the poet states, “Praising the Goddess, who is the daughter of the mountain, like a bard, I make known the *alaṃkāra* rules in the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* written by Śobhākaramitra, son of Trayīśvara.”⁷ Here we have a clear statement as to the twofold purpose of Yaśaskara's writing. One aspect is devotional: an offering of praise to the Goddess through poetry; the second is pedagogical: making the rules and aphorisms of Śobhākaramitra accessible to a wide and diverse audience by means of this hymn. The *DS* follows the order of Śobhākaramitra's text, which begins with the elucidation of several *śabdālaṃkāras* before taking up the subject of a simile (*Upamā*) and other *arthālaṃkāras*. The distinction between *Śabda* and *Artha alaṃkāras* is an important one that goes back to the beginnings of Sanskrit poetics and literary theory. The word *Śabda* means “word,” “sound,” and/or “declinable form,” and these poetic ornaments “involve no aspect of intention at all, but merely reflect variations in the structure of the language itself and of its grammar (conceived, of course, on many levels—phonology, morphology, syntax).”⁸ Examples would include different types of alliteration, cadence or rhyming, and other types of verbal or syntactical trickery. These

⁷ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 1.

⁸ Edwin Gerow, introduction to *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 22.

alaṃkāras have more of a basis in sound and the verbal/grammatical construction of a verse rather than in its overall meaning. The word *Artha*, on the other hand, signifies “meaning,” and these *alaṃkāras* depend on the overall meaning of a verse (or meanings if there is a double entendre or a pun). English language examples of these types of poetic ornaments would be simile, metaphor, synecdoche, symbolism, metonymy, and the like. However, in the development of Sanskrit literature and literary theory there is a vast and detailed lexicon to differentiate between numerous poetic ornaments and their subtypes. For example, in Sanskrit poetics, there are many different types of alliteration as well as several different ornaments under the umbrella of what we would singularly consider to be a “metaphor.” Ultimately, Sanskrit poetry and its theory comes back to this relationship between meaning (*artha*) and sound (*śabda*), as one of the earliest definitions of poetry (*kāvya*) in Sanskrit, that of Bhāmaha (c. 7th century CE) makes clear: *śabdārthau sahitaḥ kāvyam*. This means that poetry is sound and meaning joined (*sahita*), or is “word and sense” joined, as Gerow translates it.⁹ Verses can contain multiple *alaṃkāras* of both types, and many of the most sophisticated do; however, in the *DS*, Yaśaskara generally limits himself to exemplifying only the one specific *alaṃkāra* under discussion in each verse or section. This helps to serve the pedagogical role of the text, which is one of its central functions.

The first *alaṃkāra* of the text is *Punaruktavadābhāsa* which signifies the appearance of redundancy or the repetition of a word. It is noteworthy that, in a sense, there is an example of the *alaṃkāra* within the name itself. The compound can be split into *punaḥ|ukta|vada|ābhāsam* and at first glance one might see the apparent redundancy of the word “speech” in both *ukta* and *vada*, but what is meant is the *appearance* (*ābhāsa*) of a spoken (*vada*) utterance (*ukta*) again

⁹ Gerow, *A Glossary*, 25. See also Yigal Bronner, “Sanskrit Poetics,” 1244.

(*punaḥ*). There is enough flexibility in both *ukta* and *vada* (words signifying “speech, spoken, utterance,” etc.) to arrive at this definition. The *sūtra* provided from Śobhākaramitra states that “*Punaruktavadābhāsa* is [the use of] a word with [apparently] the same meaning at first.”¹⁰ To return to the example of *ukta|vada* above, although both words come from verbal roots meaning “to speak” (√*vac* and √*vad* respectively), they have other shades of meaning that allow one to construe the phrase in a way that avoids redundancy even if it gives the appearance of it. Yaśaskara offers the following verse (at the top is a roman transliteration of the Devanagari text, and at the bottom is my translation):

kṣamāvanīloka|janārti|hānau dyumat|suparva|draviṇa|arthadātrī |

vyanaktu siṃhāt|padāṅghrīruccairumāmbikā me dayayā mahotsavam || (1)

When there is ruin and affliction of the people of the world on the earth who are patient, then may Mother Parvatī, she whose feet are placed high on a lion, she who bestows wealth through her power on a shining full moon, manifest this great festival through her pity for me.

From a pedagogical perspective, the verse is rife with examples of the appearance of repetition. The first compound for example is entirely made up of them. At first glance, the first line might appear to the reader as:

kṣamā|avanī|loka|jana|ārti|hānau dyumat|suparva|draviṇa|artha|dātrī

earth|earth|people|people|ruin|ruin bright|full-moon|wealth|wealth|giver

This is admittedly quite a bewildering introduction to Yaśaskara’s text. However, each of these words come from different roots and have variations in meaning that allow us to construe coherent phrases. The word *ārti* can have a meaning closer to pain or affliction as opposed to material or physical ruin/destruction like *hāni*. The words *loka* and *jana* are commonly used to refer to “the people” or people in general, but *loka* can also commonly mean “world.” In this

¹⁰ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 1. *āmukhaikāṛthapadaṃ punaruktavadābhāsam*.

way, we can begin to construct the phrase as “when there is ruin and affliction of the people of the world...” etc. The last two words both signify “earth,” but *kṣamā* has a root meaning of “patient, enduring, bearing, etc.” (no surprise then, that it also signifies “earth”) and could in a sense refer to the people of the world “patiently” suffering in this afflicted and troubling age. Briefly, in the second half of the line, *draviṇa* can also mean “power,” and *suparvan* refers to a special day in the lunar calendar, such as the full moon or the new moon. In the second line, a notable appearance of redundancy is contained in the words *umā ambikā* which are both names of Pārvatī. The word *umā* is a specific epithet for her and doesn’t have much flexibility in meaning, but the word *ambikā* also commonly means “mother.” The word *utsava* has multiple meanings, but taking into account the verb *vyanaktu* (from the root √*vyañj*—to manifest, display, adorn) it seems to connote an occasion, jubilee, or festival of some sort. The verb is conjugated in the third-person imperative tense, which signifies a polite beseeching or a wish on the part of the speaker directed toward a person or object. Most often the speaker beseeches the Goddess (in the third person) to protect a plural “you” or “us.” This is one of the main ways in which Yaśaskara gives his verses a benedictory quality, and it is used repeatedly in subsequent verses.

I am not entirely sure if Yaśaskara has a specific festival (*utsava*) for the Goddess in mind, or if he is referring to something else. He was clearly composing in the context of Kashmiri Śaiva and Śātka traditions, but with so little information outside of the text itself it is difficult to offer anything more than speculative ideas. From a devotional perspective, what is significant about this verse is the fact that it is the only verse I have come across in my readings of the text that refers to a sort of festival or special occasion. It is also the *first* verse of the collection. It is possible that Yaśaskara composed this hymn for such an occasion. It would certainly present an opportunity to reach and interact with a wide audience (an audience outside

the small coterie of highly learned Sanskrit litterateurs), and to pass on to them this brand of poetry and poetics. It would also represent an opportunity for scholars to connect a text with occasions of lived and embodied religious practice found in Hindu ceremonies and rituals. However, with only this current information at my disposal, I can only speculate. Another important question concerns why this *alaṃkāra* is the first in not only the *DS*, but the *ARĀ* as well. In his introduction to Śobhākaramitra's text, Devadhar explains that Śobhākaramitra most likely wrote the *ARĀ* as a response to and critique of Ruyyaka's *Alaṃkārasarvasva* (early 12th century CE).¹¹ They readily disagree on the nature of *Punaruktavadābhāsa*; Ruyyaka views it as an *arthālaṃkāra* whereas Śobhākaramitra views it as a *śabdālaṃkāra*.¹² The placement of this *alaṃkāra* at the beginning of the text could serve as a way for Śobhākaramitra to mark a distinct break with his predecessor and highlight the differences of their poetics. The subtlety of this *alaṃkāra* also requires close reading, and its placement at the beginning of the text may serve as a signal to readers that a discerning eye capable of looking beyond the surface will be required.

The second *alaṃkāra*, *Yamaka* (lit. “twin” or “two-fold”) makes a creative use of the appearances of words, and what *appears* to be repetition, but in a different way. In short it involves what would seem to be the repetition of the same set of syllables, or incredibly similar syllables, yet either the words can be broken apart differently in compound, or they are meant to be taken with a different meaning, and thus it is not a repetition. Śobhākaramitra defines *Yamaka* as “the state of being a set of syllables with the same *form* [but having a different meaning].” The section on this *alaṃkāra* is also the first in which a *vṛtti* has been added to further explain the initial definition. These are culled from the *ARĀ*, and sometimes vary from what is found in the

¹¹ G. Parthasarady Rao, introduction to *Alaṃkāratnākara of Śobhākaramitra: A Study* (New Delhi: Mittal, 1992), 2.

¹² C.R. Devadhar, ed., introduction to *Alaṃkāratnākara of Śobhākaramitra* (Pune: Oriental Book Agency, 1942), vi-vii.

ARĀ itself, or are condensed versions of what Śobhākaramitra has written in his text. Usually, however, they follow Śobhākaramitra’s text quite closely. In the *vr̥tti*, *Yamaka* is further elucidated as a group of words “having a similar *form* when there is a sequence that is a collection of vowels and consonants” (italics are mine). There appears to be repetition (in a way that is different from above), but it is more complex. I have transliterated and translated Yaśaskara’s verse as follows:

kampātkṛtāntasya kṛtānukampā kampāti no yāṅghrinatendrakampā |

kālīva santāpaharī pikālī kālī nṛṇām satphaladāstu kālī || (2)

She by whom compassion is done because of Yama’s trembling, she who causes tremors in the lords bowing at her feet, whom does she not protect? May the goddess Kālī, she who removes burning affliction like dark storm-clouds, she who is dark like a flock of cuckoos, be one who bestows good fruits for people.

At the beginning and end of the four verse quarters we find what appears to be the words *kampā* (“trembling”) and *kālī* (“black,” or a name of the Goddess) repeated. In other words, the *syllables* *kampā* and *kālī* are repeated four times. The second and third appearances of *kampā* in the middle of the first line are noteworthy. In the second instance, it makes more sense to break apart the compound as *kṛta|anukampā* which would render a meaning of “[she by whom] compassion (*anukampā*) is done (*kṛta*).” Parsing the third instance was more challenging, but if we split the syllables in a way to render the two words *kam pāti* we arrive at a suitable reading. The word *kam* is an interrogative particle (who, what, etc.) and *pāti* can be a verbal form derived from the root *√pā* which means to save or protect. The main subject of the verse is the Goddess Kālī (although not every instance of the syllables “*kā-lī*” have the same meaning, or are parsed the same way) which would allow us to render a phrase (along with the particle of negation *na*) of “who/what [does she] not protect?” For its own part, the second line of the verse is quite an elegant piece of poetry. In this line, only the last *kālī* signifies the Goddess proper, the other

instances have different meanings in their particular contexts. In my reading, the first instance of *kālī* is associated with the phrase “[she who is] the remover (*harī*) of burning affliction (*santāpa*), and here *kālī iva* signifies “like (*iva*) a line of dark storm-clouds” (one of the prominent meanings of *kālī*). Although it is not the focus of the verse, there is a nice simile here; the rain contained in the storm-clouds would alleviate the burning heat of the seasons prior to the monsoon much like the Goddess herself would assuage the suffering of her devotees. The first of the middle two instances of the word isn’t *kālī* at all; the compound can actually be split into *pika|ālī* (or *alī*). The word *pika* here means “cuckoo” and *ālī* (as well as *alī*) can signify a number of things including a bee, or a group, line, or streak of something. The third *kālī* here I take simply in its adjectival form meaning “dark,” and as a whole I have translated this clause as “[she who is] dark, like a line of cuckoos [against the sky].” It is possible that there could be other readings of these particular phrases, but after much work these seemed the most plausible and poetic to me. Cuckoos and their songs can be associated with the rainy season, which allows for a nice complementarity of images in the second half of the verse. This verse notably takes up natural and seasonal imagery (flora, fauna, landscapes, etc.) as a means to describe the Goddess, and in later verses we will encounter similar imagery. Religious depictions of the goddess Kālī are noteworthy for her dark skin, her numerous blood-stained weapons, her garland of skulls, unkempt hair, fearsome teeth, and lolling tongue—these things taken together compose a terrifying image. This verse is notable for the ways in which it alludes to her dark imagery without explicitly saying so. Even the lord of death (Yama) and the other gods tremble at her feet, and the image of burning affliction engulfs those who are astray from her mercy. The darkness of the storm-clouds and the line of birds across the sky portend something ominous and harken back to her dark color and white eyes. Ultimately, for the devotee however, these things

bring rain, fruition, and relief. Both of the above verses illustrate two *alaṃkāras* that rely heavily on wordplay and semantic trickery of a sort, as well as the rich multivalence of the Sanskrit language which allows for variant readings of what might otherwise appear to be the same word. At the same time, they are able to draw out religious sentiments and compelling imagery.

The handful of verses that follow illustrate three different types of alliteration (*Anuprāsa*) in Sanskrit, and an important summary verse from the *ARĀ* follows the third of these verses. My translation of the verses alone are as follows:

surāsurendrāmalamauligasragamandamandāraraḥ ‘*ruṇāṅghri* |

visārisaṃsāraruḥjāpahānisāhāni deyātsadāyādriḥ *vaḥ* || (3)

May the compassionate daughter of the mountain, she whose feet are red with the pollen of an abundance of coral flowers in the garlands on the pure crests of the lords of gods and demons [bowing at her feet], give you the powers to vanquish the pain of pervasive saṃsāra.

jagadraṇopadravakāriraudrakarmāsurendrārpitadīrghanidrā |

bhadrāṇi vo drāgbudhabodhadātrī dadātu rudrasya vadūdayārdrā || (4)

May the wife of Rudra (Śiva), steeped in compassion—she who puts the lords of the demons (whose fierce deeds produce misfortune in the war for the world) in a deep sleep; she who awakens the wise ones—bestow on you all blessings!

haryakṣaharyakṣarathādhirūḍhā śubhrāṃśuśubhrāṃśukacatkirītā |

devendradevendravadhūrnāmasyā śivā śivā sātsu dayāparā *vaḥ* || (5)

May this auspicious Śivā (Pārvatī), she who is the bride of Śiva the lord of the gods, who is worthy of worship, she who bears a diadem shining with the white light of the moon, she who ascended the mount of a yellow-eyed lion, be supremely compassionate to you.

***Saṅgrahaśloka* (summary verse)—**

aikye ‘pyarthasya bhinnatvamabhideyāṃśabhedataḥ |

lakṣyādinā vā tātparyabhede nānyaḥ samunnayaḥ ||

There is a difference of meaning even when there seems to be a oneness, because of the division of the parts of what is to be denoted [i.e., breaking a word up differently] or by means of the difference of the secondary meaning, etc.; when there is a difference in meaning [we know] there can be no other conclusion [i.e., the difference has to be caused by one of the two reasons above].

There are striking images offered in these verses, but what I mainly wanted to show are the different sounds and even words (as they appear, anyway) repeated within them. What is most important is the last verse (from the *ARĀ*), which summarizes why the previous *alaṃkāras* were grouped together. All the preceding verses have relied upon the subtle differences in meaning of words and their appearances and sounds to create dramatic tension for the reader. The difference between the intended meaning and the meaning initially supposed can be achieved in two ways; either dividing up a word or compound differently (such as in the *pikālī* example in *DS* verse 2, translated above), or by taking the same word or compound in a different sense (there are many examples in verse 5, such as the repeated word *śubhrāṃśu*—as a whole it signifies the moon, but if broken into its constituent parts it becomes *śubhra*, white, and *aṃśu*, ray/beam of light which allows us to gloss the compound as “shining with the white light of the moon”). The second part of the summary verse I believe states that if a discriminating reader has an intuition that there is a difference in meaning (perhaps thinking that only a bad poet would just simply repeat himself), then it can only be due to these two possibilities. The preceding *alaṃkāras* all share this aspect in different ways. I think in some respects, a simple explanation for placing these poetic ornaments at the beginning of the text allows Śobhākaramitra (and Yaśaskara after him) to encourage the reader to be discriminating and to look beyond appearances. At the same time it is also clear that Śobhākaramitra is following the example of Ruyyaka and others in placing these *alaṃkāras* first.

The following two *alaṃkāras*, *Citra* (a flashy style of writing, or sometimes more specifically an illustration or word-picture) and *Upamā* (a simile), depart from the previous, and

both have extensive histories in Sanskrit poetics and literature. The text defines *Citra* poetry as “a picture possessing the form of written letters as a lotus, etc.”¹³ In this example, it is essentially a picture created by arranging the syllables from a verse or collection of verses in a pattern. In many instances the verses are constructed so that when they are arranged in such a manner, one can read them front to back, back to front, diagonally, and so on. There are three *Citra* verses offered in the *DS*, the first one being a *padmabandha* (arranged in a picture of a lotus) and the following two are *khaḍgabandhas*, or arranged in the shape of swords. In what follows I translate only the first verse and provide an illustration of a *padmabandha*:

yā mahāptihatāpāyā yā pātārtiharābhayā |

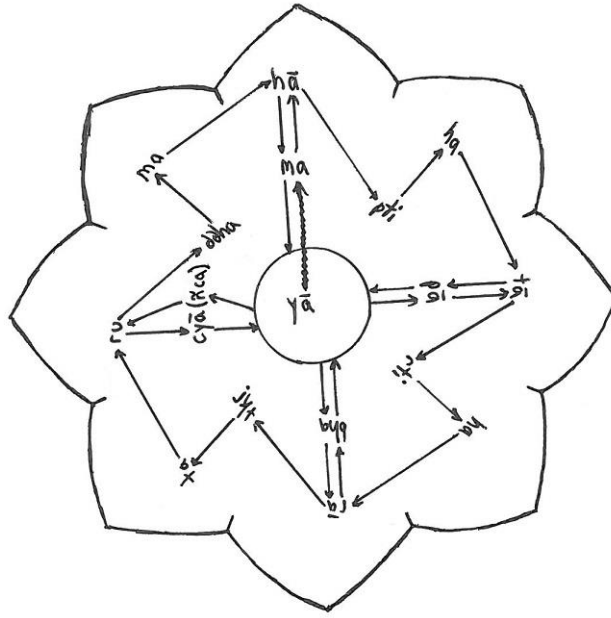
*yā bharātkṛtarucyāyā yāñcāruddhamahāmayā || [6a-1]*¹⁴

[sā durgā pātu vo] [6a-2]

She who kills misfortune by means of her auspiciousness, she who fearlessly removes pain with a strike, she one who fully manifests the arrival of light, and she one who hinders great sickness by means of her inclination, [may that Durgā protect you].

¹³ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 3. *padmādilipivarṇaviccitraṃ ca citram*.

¹⁴ These verses are numbered 1-3 in Dube’s text, which is different from other sections. The *upamā* section begins again with verse 6.



In *Citra* verses, there is always a coherent meaning, however, it can be secondary to the word art created by the arrangement of the syllables in the verse. To construct the lotus, one starts with the first syllable of the verse “yā” at the center, and constructs the picture as shown above (yā—ma—hā—pi—ha, and so on, following the order in the verse). This first syllable is important because the design returns to it at numerous intervals, and the poet must compose the verse in such a way that this can be achieved. The only fault in Yaśaskara’s verse is in the second half, where he is unable to repeat the syllable “cyā” and instead has to settle for “ñcā.” This alaṃkāra is noteworthy in the history of poetics in Kashmir because the theorist Ānandavardhana (mentioned above, who emphasized *rasa*, a poem’s emotional flavor, and the centrality of *dhvani* or “suggestion” in poetry) and his followers strongly condemned this kind of poetry as inferior. In Abinavagupta’s commentary (*Locana*) on Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka* for example, *Citra* poetry causes admiration “because of its use of meters and other [embellishments],” but it nonetheless “lacks the exudation of that nectar of true beauty that is sought by the sensitive

audience.”¹⁵ The irony of this is that as mentioned above Ānandavardhana composed his own hymn to the Goddess entirely in *Citra*-styled poetry.¹⁶ While Yaśaskara may not match Ānandavardhana’s incredibly meticulous skill at composing this type of poetry, he nonetheless provides workable examples for students and readers to study and memorize.

The following *alaṃkāra*, *Upamā* (simile), is the first instance of a major *arthālaṃkāra* (an *alaṃkāra* centered on meaning) in Yaśaskara’s text, and its definition provides key terms that will inform the discussion of subsequent poetic ornaments and verses in the *Devīstotra*. As opposed to *śabdālaṃkāras*, an *arthālaṃkāra* is rooted in the meaning of the verse itself, rather than in wordplay, sounds and alliterations, or secondary meanings of specific words or sets of syllables. The *sūtra* and further explication of *Upamā* are as follows:

Sūtra— *upamānenopameyasya sādṛśyamupamā |*

A simile is the resemblance (*sādṛśya*) of the subject of comparison (*upameya*) with the standard of comparison (*upamāna*).

Vṛtti— *prasiddhaguṇenopamānenāprasiddhaguṇasyopameyasya sādṛśyahetunā guṇādinā dharmeṇa sādharṃyapratipādanamupamā |*

A simile is the production of the state of similitude by means of a distinguishing quality (*dharma*) and a commonly known property (*guṇādi*) which are the cause of the resemblance of the subject of comparison (the not very well-known quality—*aprasiddha*) with the standard of comparison (the well-known quality—*prasiddha*).

The words *upamāna*, *upameya*, and *sādṛśya* (and variants thereof) show up repeatedly in subsequent discussions of other *arthālaṃkāras*. To use a very basic example: “this woman’s face is as fair as the moon;” here the standard of comparison (*upamāna*—what is well known) is the moon itself, the subject of comparison (*upameya*—what is particular or less well known) is the face of this woman, and the likeness or resemblance (*sādṛśya*) that connects the two is the

¹⁵ Daniel H. H. Ingalls, Jeffery Masson, and M. V. Patwardhan, *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 134.

¹⁶ Ingalls, “Ānandavardhana’s Devīśataka,” 565.

attribute of fairness that both share. There are many variations on this alaṃkāra in subsequent sections, but the summary verse at the end of this section makes clear that, “A simile is considered to be the likeness of what is not well known with what is well known, but *not* of something well known with the other because that would be an error.” This means that the standard of comparison needs to be something that all readers can universally understand or relate to (for example, the moon, a flower, someone or something from a well-known story, e.g., a piece of Sītā’s jewelry, and the like). This is what the subject of comparison (what the poet wants to ornament) is being *compared to*, and if it is an uncommon or highly particular object the simile becomes obscure and meaningless to most readers. Yaśaskara offers this verse:

gaṅgeva nityāśritapuṇḍarikā phalapradā kalpalatālateva |

śaśiprabhevāmṛtadā prasannā tuṣāraśailendrasutāvatādvaḥ || (6)

She who continually depends on Śiva like the Ganges, she who is the giver of gifts like the vine of the wish-fulfilling creeper, she who gives immortal nectar (*amṛta*) like the light of the moon, may she, the happy daughter of the lord of the snowy peaks, protect you.”

This example makes clear that a standard of comparison needs to be a well-known and relatable object for the reader. It is also important to note the particle *iva* which signifies “like” or “as” in Sanskrit literature. There are three similes in this verse, and Pārvatī (although she is a quite renowned poetic object herself) is the *subject* of all of them. The first simile recalls the famous story of the descent from heaven of the Ganges river onto the topknot of Śiva’s hair and its purifying qualities that result from its association with him.¹⁷ The third simile associates Pārvatī with the moon, which in Hindu mythology is the source of Soma. Although the Goddess is herself famous enough to be a standard of comparison, she is the subject the poet is seeking to

¹⁷ Cornelia Dimmit and J.A.B. van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇas* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1978), 322.

praise, and the standards she is being compared to are also famous and familiar aspects of Hindu myth and storytelling.

Śobhākaramitra was responsible in the *ARĀ* for coining and explaining new poetic devices when he saw the need to. One example of this is the *alaṃkāra Pratimā* (“likeness”) which stands on its own in a sort of a middle space between a proper simile and a metaphor and its variants (*Rūpaka*, *Utprekṣā*, and the like). *Pratimā* can be defined as a sort of similarity or likeness produced from the connection between certain qualities or characteristics of two objects, but *not* a complete likeness between the objects themselves. A useful example may be to think of a warrior who shoots his arrows so skillfully that it is like the way in which Arjuna fought in the *Mahābhārata*. As described in the epic, Arjuna himself is a warrior without equal, so to make a direct comparison between the two would be frivolous. However, the incredible skill of this mortal warrior in archery is *comparable* to the skill of the matchless Arjuna. Yaśaskara composes an interesting verse to exemplify this *alaṃkāra*:

balāni bhagnāni sahemavāharathaistathāstrāṇi nirākṛtāni |

kāryaṃ tvayā yadyudhi dānavānāṃ tvadvāhasimhena kṛtaṃ tadāsi || (12)

Their powers broken and their missiles aborted by means of your divine chariots and horses—O Goddess, do again what you did to the demons in battle with your lion mount!

This verse is unique in that it doesn’t rely on the often repeated imperative “May the Goddess protect/save/grant her blessings to you” while also demanding some imaginative input from the reader in forming the *Pratimā* comparison. Although it is unstated, what I see as the main comparison in this verse is that which is between the demons that the Goddess previously obliterated in battle and the current afflictions of her devotees. As objects they are not directly comparable, but certain characteristics they possess are. Just as she smote the powers of the demons in battle, her devotees ask her to break the power their current stresses and afflictions

have over them and to destroy their painful arrows striking at the heart. The verse creatively balances the elucidation of the *alaṃkāra* under discussion with an original use of devotional themes and imagery.

Along with the simile, another important poetic device is metaphor, and in Sanskrit the *alaṃkāra* titled *Rūpaka* is most often thought of as its equivalent. On the one hand, I agree with this view, but I would add that I and others do see important elements of metaphor in other *alaṃkāras* to be discussed, such as *Utprekṣā*. Borrowing from the *ARĀ*, *Rūpaka* is defined as a projection (*āropah*) or the superimposition of one thing onto another. It is explained further as “the projection of two things which is described by means of having the same substratum (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*)¹⁸, but not an identification of an object and another elsewhere.” What I gather from this is that both things being identified with each other are mentioned specifically in the text, and should be in the same case. Furthermore, this ‘sameness of substratum’ signifies that the identification of the two objects comes from a bedrock of similitude, but the poet pushes more completely for this identification rather than just a comparison. I am not entirely sure what is signified by the last clause, but I think that the category of *Rūpaka* excludes the forced superimposition of one thing onto another *without* this basis of similarity. It would be one thing to say that “love is a rose,” but it would strike the listener differently to say that the person you love is a rose. One may give her roses, and her name might even be “Rose,” but in my view there is more of a bedrock similarity between the idea of love (its passions and pains) and the figure of a rose (its deep red flower and its thorns) that makes the identification between the two more understandable to the reader. There are multiple layers of metaphor in Yaśaskara’s verse and it is one of his more poetic ones:

netrotpalānandakṛdānanenduḥ samaprasādo ‘vatu vaḥ śivāyāḥ |

¹⁸ Their substratum (*adhikaraṇya/adhikaraṇa*) is the same (*samāna*). See Dube, *Devīstotra*, 8.

manaḥsamudram giriśasya dṛṣṭam karoti jātotkalikotkaram yaḥ || (26)

May Pārvatī's moon-face, which is the kindness and equanimity that produces joy in the lotuses of the eyes, and which manifests as rising waves in the mind-ocean of the lord of the mountain (Śiva), protect you!

The core example of Rūpaka from this verse is the identification in compound of the moon (*indu*) with Pārvatī's face (*ānana*). It is the central subject of the verse and fits the definition of projecting something onto another with a substratum of likeness. There is also a further identification between her kindness (*samaprasāda*) and this moon-face (*ānanendu*). I think both are examples of Rūpaka, but the identification of a woman's face with the moon is more readily apparent. The way the compound “*ānana|induh*” is constructed inverts the usual way a reader might identify these two objects. Rather than being a face that “is” or “is like” the moon, the verse states that this moon *is* the face of Pārvatī.¹⁹ One of the beauties of this verse stems from the fact that just as the closeness of the moon to the earth affects the tides and causes the waters to rise toward it, so does the nearness of Pārvatī face affect the vast range of feelings within Śiva.²⁰ Also, the manifestation of her face to Śiva or to any of her devotees is itself a manifestation of kindness and it is notable that the word *samaprasadaḥ* shares the same case, number, and gender as the word *induh*. There are multiple layers of identification and projection in the verse; the grace and equanimity of Pārvatī, which is the moon, is also her face, and this kindness delights the mind-ocean of Śiva just as it excites the feelings of her devotees.

The *alaṃkāras* following Rūpaka have qualities that resemble “metaphor” as conceived in English, but at the same time they show the level of detail and nuance that is the currency of

¹⁹ Sanskrit is read left to right, but compounds on the other hand are always read right to left, with the word that precedes (in this case *ānana*) being grammatically dependent on those that follow it (*indu*). In terms of the basic parsing of compounds, the first one in the verse is a better example. Read from right to left it reads, “produces (*kṛt*) joy (*ānanda*) in the lotuses (*utpala*) of the eyes (*netra*).”

²⁰ The ocean (*samudra*) that is the mind (*manas*) of Śiva is yet another instance of Rūpaka.

Sanskrit poetics. The following two *alaṃkāras*, *Apahnuti* (lit. “denial” or “concealment”) and *Vitarka* (“conjecture” or “negative reasoning”) are related in that they both have metaphoric qualities along with some sort of negation. The further explanation from the *ARĀ* for *Apahnuti* is:

Vṛtti—One type is the expression of another object when there is a negation of the qualities present in a projection. The other is the imposition of a subordinate object on the chief object.

In his *Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*, Edwin Gerow cites an illustrative example of *Apahnuti* from one of the earliest poetic theorists, Bhāmaha: “It is not a swarm of bees, humming incessantly of honey; it is the sound of the Love-hunter’s bow being drawn.”²¹ In this instance, the main object, the swarm of bees, is concealed by what is imagined (the twanging of Kāma’s bowstring as he prepares to fire an arrow). Since both have a humming sound it allows for a sense of identification between the two. The verse offered by Yaśaskara is not quite as clear as others, but I translate it in this way:

asau śaśī dainyaniśātamojit surāmbujollāsakṛdeṣa bhānuḥ |

nāhaṃ hi siṃho mṛgaheti bhaktyā ganaiḥ stuto [vaḥ] ‘vyātsa harirbhavānyāḥ || (29)

That’s not the moon, the conqueror of the dark night of affliction, that’s the sun, the maker of the moon’s splendor.

May that lion (hariḥ) of Bhavānī, praised thus by devotees with devotion: “I am not the common lion (siṃhaḥ) who kills deer,” protect [you].

This verse was difficult to translate because it contains two distinct and, as far as I can tell, unrelated groups of images in its two halves. In the first half I imagine the speaker is looking out at a full moon during the night, and its brightness is so immense that he negates the reality of what he is seeing and takes it to be the sun (the moon of course reflecting the sun’s light). With regard to the verse’s construction, it isn’t entirely clear which is the principal object and which is subordinate, or which is the concealer and the one being concealed. A literal translation would be

²¹ Gerow, *A Glossary*, 109.

something like “That over there is the moon, the conqueror of the dark night of affliction; this is the sun, the maker of the moon’s splendor;”²² the speaker could hypothetically be looking at an evening sky in which both the sun and moon are present, but then there would be no example of *Apahnuti* in this part of the verse. Looking back at Gerow’s example, the real object of the senses is what is subordinated or made remote, and what is imagined is made the principal object, at least in the poetic sense. The second half of the verse leaves a feeling of incompleteness; in a basic sense, the syntax seems clear, but the verse jumps from a first-person quote to a lion²³ being praised in the third person by Pārvatī’s devotees. No explanation for this is provided, and although a general sense of connection of the two verse halves could be inferred (i.e. a common earthly lion is a pale reflection of the Goddess’ lion just as the moon is a pale reflection of the sun) it is unclear how and if they are meant to be taken together.

The *alaṃkāra* of negative reasoning (*Vitarka*) is much clearer. It essentially involves the speculation or wonderment at an occurrence, only for different possibilities to be eliminated after evidence to the contrary emerges. The definition of *Vitarka* is the “negative reasoning related to something that was considered possible, or is being considered as possible.”²⁴ The verse that Yaśaskara composes for *Vitarka* is as follows:

iyam taditkim kva sa meghakhaṇḍo dāvānalārciḥ kimu kutra dhūmaḥ |
caṇḍāṃśumūrtiḥ kimu kutra te ‘śvāḥ prokteti daityairyudhi caṇḍikāvyaṭ || (32)

“Is this lightning? But where is there even a part of a cloud? Is this a flame of a forest fire? Where is there smoke?
 Is this the form of the Sun (the fierce-rayed one)? But where are the horses (rays)?”
 —May the fierce Goddess, described thus by demons in battle, protect you!

²² I take the pronoun *asau* (*asau śaśī*) “that moon” in the sense that it can signify remoteness and subsequently subordination, which can be further inferred by *eṣa bhānuḥ* “this sun.”

²³ The word *hariḥ* also has several meanings, although it is most likely taken the same as *simhaḥ* (“lion”).

²⁴ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 10. *sambhāvitāsambhāvyamānāpoho vitarkaḥ*.

The demons in battle, wondering out loud at their destruction at the light and power of the Goddess, articulate the kind of reasoning and negation of possibilities that are central to this *alaṃkāra*. The verse consists largely of a number of pointed questions whose possible answers are immediately negated by the question that follows, which builds a sense of surprise and uncertainty. If they were being smote by lightning there would have to be clouds, if it was a forest fire there would be smoke, and if it was the sun they would be able to see the horses that are its rays. Their confusion is due to the awesome power of the Goddess; the same power that her devotees beg for in need of their own protection.

The *alaṃkāra* following these is *Utprekṣā*, and it is defined by Śobhākaramitra as “imagining (or fancying) by means of the state of being a subject (of certain qualities).” In a basic sense, one can think of it as Apte does in his English-Sanskrit dictionary as “Poetical fancy.”²⁵ Edwin Gerow states that in many respects, *Utprekṣā* “probably comes closer than any other [*alaṃkāra*] to capturing the sense of the vague term metaphor” and states that,

Although *rūpaka* is generally translated ‘metaphor’ [...] its use in the Sanskrit anthologies makes clear that a far more precise meaning is to be attached to the term than ‘metaphor’ will allow. [...] The relation of identification [in *Rūpaka*] is of course directly from one term to another and does not require the interposition of properties, although these may implicitly substantiate the identification.²⁶

In the syntactical construction of Sanskrit poetry, a verse containing *Rūpaka* will have a direct grammatical relationship and identification between two things that are the co-subjects of the verse. On the other hand, *Utprekṣā* allows for a much greater flexibility, which leads me to generally agree with Apte and Gerow. Although in the world of English language poetry we generally do not make such minute distinctions between types of metaphor there are nonetheless several examples. Consider Carl Sandburg’s short poem “Fog”:

²⁵ V. S. Apte, *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998), 414.

²⁶ Gerow, *A Glossary*, 131.

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.²⁷

This is a clear example of *Utprekṣā* as opposed to *Rūpaka*. The metaphoric identification of the qualities of the two things is evident to the reader, but there is no *explicit* identification between the fog and a cat as objects in and of themselves. If this verse were to contain a full identification as in *Rūpaka*, it might read something like, “The fog which is a cat comes in on little soft feet....” and so on. In this instance, the *explicit identification* of two objects is evident, as it was in Yaśaskara’s prior example identifying the moon with Pārvatī’s face. However, in this example the fog, through imaginative fancy, can take on cat-like qualities without needing an explicit identification or projection (*Rūpaka*) or a relationship of comparison expressed by “like/as” as in a simile (*Upamā*). In his further elucidation, Śobhākaramitra claims that the base of this fancying (*sambhāvanā*) is doubt (*sandeha*)²⁸ since it conveys a sense of non-certainty (*aniścaya*) or indefiniteness, and it does not contain a sense of determination or clarity.²⁹ His comments are interesting in that they are a reaction to other characterizations of *Utprekṣā*, namely that of Ruyyaka in his *Alaṃkārasarvasva*. Ruyyaka’s own definition reads “When the chief [mental] action is determination (*adhyavasāya*), that is *Utprekṣā*.”³⁰ Although Śobhākaramitra acknowledges that this mental determination can be partially present in certain cases, he claims that the “scope of *sambhāvana* however falls beyond [the two types of definite knowledge: that which is valid or erroneous] and so it cannot come under definite knowledge. [...] That is why

²⁷ Carl Sandburg, *Chicago Poems* (New York: Henry Holt, 1916), 71.

²⁸ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 10. *sambhāvanāyāḥ sandehamulatvam*.

²⁹ Ibid., *na tu adhyavasāyagarbhatā*.

³⁰ Rao, *Alaṃkāraratnākara: A Study*, 88. *adhyavasāye vyāpārāprādhānye utprekṣā*.

unlike [in other cases] (where we have definiteness of the object) here there is no definiteness of the object (*viṣayin*).³¹ One of Śobhākaramitra's examples (which I translate below) cites a verse from Kālīdāsa's *Raghuvamśa* in which a crestfallen Rāma is looking for clues to Sītā's kidnapping and whereabouts:

[*sā*] *eṣā sthalī yatra vicinvatā tvām bhraṣṭaṃ mayā nūpuramekamurvyām |*
adr̥ṣyata tvaccaraṇaravindaviśleṣaduḥkhādiva baddhamaunam || (RV. 13.23)³²

This is that very spot where, searching for you, I saw one anklet fallen on the ground, silence-bound as if grieving from its separation from your lotus feet.

Even though the particle *iva* is present (and can be found in examples of *Utprekṣā*), this verse is not a simile (i.e., one thing is “like” another) since there is no definite comparison between two objects. In this instance, *iva* has the meaning of “as if.” What we have is the quality of the overwhelming grief of a forsaken lover (Rāma) identified with an anklet (an inanimate object) that has been itself left behind. As in Carl Sandburg's verse, the chief object is not explicitly mentioned in connection to the quality (grief) being described, which would make this an *Utprekṣā*. Taking Śobhākaramitra's poetics into account, Yaśaskara gives the following example:

gaurīrucā prāptaguḥānuṣaṅgā sakesaro yaddharipatrayuktā |
punātu ratyāḥ kamituḥ priyasya sañjivanīvāuṣadhiradrijā vaḥ || (33)

May the mountain-born daughter, a medicinal plant like the life restoring elixir, splendidous and beautiful, full of green leaves with a filament clinging to a cave where it is found, who pleases her dear husband, rejuvenate you.

³¹ Rao, *Alaṃkāraśāstra: A Study*, 88. The *viṣayin* literally is the “possessor of qualities (*viśaya*)”; i.e. in Sandburg's verse above the *viṣayin* would be the cat. Since the qualities of the cat and not the cat itself are identified with the fog there remains a level of “indefiniteness” that characterizes this verse. In Śobhākaramitra's view, one can't say for certain whether the identification of the cat's qualities and the fog itself is either valid or erroneous, hence it is not “definite” knowledge.

³² See Devadhar, *Alaṃkāraśāstra*, 47.

In this verse, the Goddess is identified with the qualities of a medicinal and life-restoring herb, and just as the plant can revive someone who is gravely ill, the speaker wishes for the same type of rejuvenation for her devotees. Here, there is no explicit projection of the medicinal plant onto the Goddess, but there is an exchange of qualities.

The last major *alaṃkāra* I will discuss is *Vakrokti* (“crooked speech”), and Yaśaskara’s own verses in this section are quite lucid and imaginative. In their co-authored article on the *Vakroktipañcāśikā* of Ratnākara (9th cent.) Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea attest that this crooked speech is “traditionally defined as one speaker’s misconstrual of what has been said by another.”³³ As they note, the theorist Rudraṭa was the first to give definition and discussion to this *alaṃkāra* in his work, and furthermore it is noteworthy that his own example of crooked speech is “clearly an imitation of a verse from Ratnākara’s poem.”³⁴ It may not be entirely certain whether or not Ratnākara invented this poetic device himself, but his poem is nonetheless the earliest and most foundational text that makes extensive use of it. Taking the *Devīstotra* into consideration I would argue that at least one of Yaśaskara’s own verses owes much to Ratnākara’s style and structure, and was most likely influenced by him. Bronner and McCrea also provide an instructive note that discusses Rudraṭa’s division of *Vakrokti* into two types: one, *śleṣavakrokti*, “consists of distortive dialogue based on bitextuality,” (which means that it involves two speakers and certain double entendres), and the second, *kākuvakrokti*, “entails a monologue in which, by means of intonation, a second, ironic meaning is hinted at.”³⁵

Śobhākaramitra’s definition states that “When there is a use in one way of a word and meaning

³³ Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea, “The Poetics of Distortive Talk: Plot and Character in Ratnākara’s ‘Fifty Verbal Perversions’ (*Vakroktipañcāśikā*),” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29, (2001): 436.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 439.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 458.

that are fit for use in another way, that is crooked speech.”³⁶ Ratnākara’s text consists of a fraught dialogue between Śiva and Pārvatī in which she is fed up with his habits and affairs and wants to leave, but is caught off guard and stopped in her tracks by his deliberate misconstruals of what she says to him. Bronner and McCrea translate one of these verses that reads clearly in both Sanskrit and English as the epigraph of their article:

[Pārvatī] “What have I left to say?”

[Śiva] “Have you left? You’re present to my right!”

[P] “What present have you kept [from me]? please tell me. You are known as the Renouncer of All.”

[Ś] “You’re absolutely divine girl.”

[P] “I’m not the vine girl at all.”

May Śiva — smiling as he is defeated by the Daughter of the Mountain — point you to good fortune.³⁷

In this verse Pārvatī has begun to catch onto Śiva’s verbal game, and over the course of the poem it takes numerous emotional turns (both good and bad) that ultimately end with a heartbroken Pārvatī giving up the game and submitting to her husband. In this verse, the deliberate misunderstandings in Sanskrit are translated very well, and although it is humorous and playful it does not show the extent of Śiva’s ruthlessness and sometimes cruelty in keeping his wife at bay in other parts of the poem. Bronner and McCrea reflect on the devotional nature of this poem and the notion that the relationship between Śiva and Pārvatī, husband and wife, is emblematic of the relationship between the God and the devotee: “Often the god takes hold of the devotee against his or her will. [...] One may love or hate, praise or abuse, desire or be disgusted by the god, but in the end, one must embrace him as he is.”³⁸ Although his poem strikes a more measured tone than Ratnākara’s, I think in some respects this is true of Yaśaskara’s conception of the Goddess-devotee relationship. I translate his verses on *Vakrokti* as follows:

³⁶ Dube, *Devīstotra*, 30. *anyathā sambhāvitayoḥ śabāṛthayoranyathā yojanaṃ vakroktiḥ*.

³⁷ Bronner and McCrea, “Poetics of Distortive Talk,” 435.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 455.

gavi sthitaḥ prekṣya hareḥ padsthāṃ kālīm mudā nṛtyati kaḥ satṛṣṇaḥ |

jaye mayuro na hi haṃsakah anyah priyastavaeśītyuditādrijāvyāt || (126)

adreh sutā tvam prathitāsi kālī ravestanūjā yamunāsmi nāham |

girīśajāyāsi nagendrajā kva yāmīti sakyhāḥ kathayantyumāvyāt || (127)³⁹

May the daughter of the mountain protect you, who was addressed, “Seeing the foot of Śiva, the black cloud, standing on the earth, what peacock doesn’t dance with joy and thirst in victory beside your favorite anklet, O Goddess!”

Friend: “You are known as Kālī, the daughter of the mountain.”

[Pārvatī hears: “You are known as Kālī born from the sun.”]

Pārvatī: “I’m not Yamunā, daughter of the sun.”

[Her friend hears: “I’m not Yamunā, the daughter of the mountain.”]

Friend: “You are the wife of Śiva, the lord of the mountain!”

[Pārvatī hears: “You are the wife of your father, the lord of the mountain!”]

Pārvatī: “But where is the daughter of Mt. Meru, O friend?”⁴⁰

May that Umā protect you, speaking thus with her friend.

The first of the two verses is an example of *kākuvakrokti*, and the second verse is an example of *śleṣavakrokti*. The first verse is not exactly a monologue, since the speaker is speaking to the Goddess, but still there is no reply or rejoinder as in *śleṣavakrokti*. The irony or distortive speech within the verse hinges on the word “*haṃsaka*” which can mean both “goose” and “ankle ornament.” At first, one would think that a goose is simply joining several peacocks who are dancing because the advent of the rainy season announces the prospects of finding a mate. However, the *haṃsaka* is really Pārvatī’s anklet dancing around her lower leg as she dances at the sight of Śiva (*hariḥ*) with the black raincloud. Since the word *haṃsaka* is inflected in this different way, this is therefore a *kākuvakrokti*. Just as in Ratnākara’s poem, Yaśaskara’s second verse features a slanted dialogue between two people in which one or both is divine and the other

³⁹ Words which have double entendre are underlined.

⁴⁰ Pārvatī’s father is the Himālaya mountain, and his wife is Menā, the daughter of Mt. Meru, *another* important mountain in Hindu mythology. Pārvatī thinks her friend is mistaking her first for Yamunā and then for her own mother. Her friend would hear this last statement and again think that Pārvatī was referring to herself as the “daughter of the lord of the mountain.”

is subordinate, along with a benediction to the readers and devotees at the end. There are words in each of the rapid statements of both Pārvatī and her friend that have double meanings that are misheard by the listener at points in the dialogue. In the first part of the verse, the words *adri* and *ravi* can both mean “mountain” and “sun,” which naturally leads to confusion between Pārvatī and her friend. The word *kālī* (the “dark one”) can be an epithet for both Pārvatī and Yamunā, two different divine women. The Yamunā is a sacred river (personified as a goddess) and is the twin sister of Yama, the god of death, who are both children of Sūrya, the sun. In the second part of the verse, the compound *girīśa|jayā* (“wife of the lord of the mountain”) could apply to both Pārvatī herself and her mother Menā. Likewise, in Pārvatī’s final question, the epithet *nagendra|jā* (“daughter of the lord of the mountain”) could be again applied to either her mother or herself. The syntax and arrangement of the verse follows quite closely with that of Ratnākara, however it doesn’t appear that in this example Pārvatī and her friend are *deliberately* misunderstanding each other and misconstruing one another’s statements as Pārvatī and Śiva do in Ratnākara’s *Vakroktipañcāśikā*. To me, the first verse celebrates the Goddess and by extension Śiva by means of connecting the joy of their relationship to nature and the seasons. The second verse strikes me as having a much more relaxed and conversational tone in comparison to the *Vakroktipañcāśika*, and it praises Pārvatī while also shedding light on her relationship to her husband and family.

III. Significance of the *Devīstotra* as a Devotional and Pedagogical Text

Having closely read and discussed certain sections of the text and in some cases its relationship to Śobhākaramitra's *Alaṃkāraśāstra*, this section poses questions pertaining to significant aspects of the *Devīstotra* in the context of Kashmir and the wider world of Sanskrit literature and history. This involves thinking about the *DS* as both a devotional hymn (*stotra*) and as a text of *alaṃkāraśāstra*, the discipline (*śāstra*) of poetic ornamentation and theory. As a devotional text, the *DS* has ties to Śaiva and Śākta traditions in Kashmir and north India, and in the creation of his verses, Yaśaskara relies broadly on previous mythologies and literatures of the Goddess. As a pedagogical text, the *DS* bears comparison to a long line of *śāstrakāvya* texts, or “poems which also exemplify particular learned disciplines,” that include the 7th-century *Bhaṭṭikāvya* among others.⁴¹ In my view, the connection between Yaśaskara's poetry and pedagogy is one of the most important and intriguing aspects of his text. Like other hymns of praise before it, the *Devīstotra* consciously engages with both human and divine interlocutors, and along with other *stotras* both inside and outside of Kashmir it raises “the question of audience more insistently and productively than other genres” of Sanskrit literature.⁴²

One of the earliest hymns to the Goddess in Kashmiri Sanskrit literature is found in the *Haravijaya* of Ratnākara, which was composed around 830 CE. The 47th canto of the work is a hymn to Caṇḍī (the “Fierce one,” an epithet for Durgā), in which the author “runs through the goal-states of all soteriologies as aspects or manifestations of the one Śaiva Goddess.”⁴³ The Goddess herself manifests at the height of a battle, and her fierce and terrifying aspects are

⁴¹ Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb, introduction to *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2014.), 11.

⁴² Hamsa Stainton, “Poetry as Prayer in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir” (working books MS, University of Kansas, 2017), 51.

⁴³ Alexis Sanderson, “Kashmir,” *Brill Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, 1st ed., (Boston: Brill, 2009), 107.

juxtaposed with her benevolent qualities as mother who loves and shields her devotees. Since the Goddess both embodies the violent and bloody aspects of the battle and neutralizes them for her followers, the *Caṇḍīstotra* presents “a vision of cosmic order not bereft of violence but rather encompassing and going beyond it.”⁴⁴ Although it may lack more complex theological underpinnings, the *DS* also paints a picture of a Goddess that is at turns both brutal and benevolent in a way not so unlike Ratnākara’s work.

The famous 11th-century Kashmiri polymath and philosopher Abhinavagupta was also responsible for composing several *stotras*, in this case to Śiva himself. His hymns are rooted in a highly developed Śaiva theology and his own non-dualistic philosophy, and he is able to use the form of the *stotra* as a means “to put a theological perspective into action, demonstrating how it can be articulated in language even though that language seems to imply duality.”⁴⁵ This perspective is evident in Abhinavagupta’s *Kramastotra*; a verse from which Hamsa Stainton translates as:

O Bhava! If the various activities of the lord,
whose many powers are manifested through his great sovereignty,
are based in one’s own heart,
then how could that heart offer praise?
And yet it does.
Through this praise, homage to Śiva becomes
the primary means of quickly obtaining oneness with Śiva. (*KrSt* 6)⁴⁶

As in other places in the *stotra*, this verse seeks to resolve the paradox of what is apparent differentiation and yet ultimate oneness with Śiva. The theological density and philosophical tone are readily apparent in this verse and many others of Abhinavagupta. The poet rhetorically asks how his heart can offer praise to Śiva if, accounting for the oneness of all, Śiva’s many

⁴⁴ Stainton, “Poetry as Prayer,” 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 103. *bhava prājyaisvāyapraṭhitabahuśakter bhagavato vicitraṃ cāritraṃ hṛdayam adhiśete yadi tataḥ | katham stotraṃ kuryād atha ca kurute tena sahasā śivaikātmīyaprāptau śivanatir upāyaḥ prathamakah |*

powers (even those of differentiation—i.e., *I praise you, may you protect me*, etc.) are themselves rooted in his heart. Nonetheless, he notes that the heart still offers praise. Abhinavagupta justifies this praise by explaining it as “an expedient method for realizing identity with Śiva.”⁴⁷ This verse strikes me in the way it combines Śaiva theology, non-dual philosophy, and emotional *bhakti* all within the refined medium of Sanskrit. It is not a rote summarization of dry philosophical speculation, but is an expression of emotional questioning, speculation, and resolution that is characteristic of the most enduring devotional poetry.

I bring up the examples of Ratnākara and Abhinavagupta in order to grant some brief perspective on Yaśaskara’s historical antecedents and contexts, and to provide some points of comparison to the *Devīstotra* as a devotional text. Like Yaśaskara, both Ratnākara and Abhinavagupta were Kashmirian, and were important members of the same communities that Yaśaskara must have known, albeit during earlier times. However, unlike Yaśaskara they were both well-known and erudite poet-scholars who authored famous and enduring works in multiple genres, the dating of which (and the dating of the persons themselves) we can ascribe with a great deal of confidence. Śobhākaramitra and Ratnakaṇṭha, for their part, are somewhat better known and more easily dated than Yaśaskara (Ratnakaṇṭha himself wrote several *stotras* and commentaries), but as mentioned before, the period between these two figures in which Yaśaskara falls is roughly 500 years, and the *Devīstotra* is the sole work attributed to him. In thinking of the *Devīstotra* as a devotional text, one wants to explore the question of how to concretely characterize and describe the *bhakti* or devotion of Yaśaskara as expressed through the text, but this is a difficult task to accomplish. As far as we know, he has authored no court poem or epic which would give insight into his patronage, life, and immediate religious contexts,

⁴⁷ Stainton, “Poetry as Prayer,” 104.

nor has he authored any work of philosophy or theology which would give us a system of thought. All we have is the *DS* text itself (a terse collection of verses when compared to those of Ratnākara and Abhinavagupta), and at a secondary level, the influence of Śobhākaramitra's system of poetics.

As mentioned previously, the colophon of the *Devīstotra* provides at least some insight into Yaśaskara's religious life and background, even if there is little in the way of concrete information. It significantly mentions the shrine to the goddess Śārikā which resides on Pradyuma Hill overlooking the city Śrīnagar, and who is one of the Kashmiri "local goddesses who are venerated as the lineages deities (*kuladevī*) of sections of the Kashmirian Brahmins."⁴⁸ It is speculative but not so unlikely that Yaśaskara belonged to one such Brahmin lineage, or had a similar higher caste background, and was thus able to learn Sanskrit and gain an awareness of the poetics and devotional literature of previous Kashmiri authors. As a side-note, Alexis Sanderson further states that only the goddess Śārikā "can be shown to be ancient, since her mythology is already related in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* [c. 1063-82 CE]," and that there is no evidence that she or other deities were propitiated as "lineage goddesses" before the 17th century.⁴⁹ This shows that the goddess Śārikā was well established in the time of Yaśaskara and Ratnakaṇṭha, and even as far back as Śobhākaramitra. Yaśaskara may very well have been aware of the festivals, rituals, and activities associated with the Śārikāpīṭha near Śrīnagar along with other local goddesses when he was composing his verses. In the sections of the *DS* that I have studied and translated, it seems that Yaśaskara most often chooses to depict the Goddess as the motherly and loving Pārvatī who blesses and protects her devotees. However, there are examples of her other aspects as well. The verse he composed for the ornament *Vitarka* for example,

⁴⁸ Sanderson, "Kashmir," 111.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 111.

quoted above (*DS* v. 32), conveys the fierceness and terror of the Goddess through the bewildered questions of the demons opposing her in battle. The fierce light that brings about their destruction is no natural phenomenon (lightning, a fire, or the sun); it is the otherworldly power of the Goddess that erases the darkness in front of her devotees. Another verse, elucidating the *alaṃkāra Viparyaya* (a new figure in Śobhākaramitra's time, signifying a sort of "exchange" of qualities between two things) reads:

śīlīmukhāḥ saṃyati vairimuktāḥ puṣpībhavanti tvadupāsakasya |

puṣpāṇi tena prahitāni teṣāṃ tava prabhāveṇa śīlīmukhanti || (64)

The arrows loosed in battle by enemies become flowers for your worshipper, and the flowers thrown by him [at your feet] by means of your miraculous power become arrows for them.

This verse is able to succinctly capture the dichotomy of the Goddess' attention on her enemies (destruction) and her devotees (compassion), as well as the contrast between the supernatural: the cosmic battles between Goddess and the demons, and the mundane: the everyday *pūjās* and offerings left by her worshippers at her feet. It also shows in a sense not only how her devotees are dependent on her for her blessings, but perhaps how she is also dependent on them for their support and devotion. What arrows would she have to fend off and kill her enemies if her followers didn't leave their flowers at her feet? Furthermore, if she wasn't perpetually in battle fending the arrows of demonic and evil forces, what then could she offer back as *prasāda* to her devotees? In this way, the verse stresses the symbiosis between devotee and deity in a very compact manner. Although there is no use of the first-person in this verse or in other examples, and although self-reflexive statements and statements of authorial intent are absent from the text, one can still acquire a sense of Yaśaskara's religious sensibilities by reading the *Devīstotra*. He made clear the mutual dependence between the Goddess and her devotees, and as the colophon

indicates, he was aware of local Kashmiri Śākta deities and points of worship in and around Śrīnagar. One can also think back to the first verse of the *DS* in which the poet asks the Goddess to manifest a lunar festival for her devotees. The *bhakti* of Yaśaskara is not the type commonly thought of as being one in which the norms of society, caste, gender, and hierarchy are rejected, and in which iconoclastic first person poems and narratives in vernacular languages are widespread. In a way, it may be like that of Rūpa Gosvāmin, an important 15th-century Vaiṣṇava scholar and poet, whose brand of *bhakti* David Buchta describes as being “informed by a broad, largely Sanskrit-based intellectual heritage.”⁵⁰ Yaśaskara draws inspiration from this same heritage, both as a *bhakta* and, as we will see, as an aesthete and teacher. His work bears an awareness of Kashmiri Śāktism, and it also incorporates an awareness of the broader *alaṃkāraśāstra* tradition in Kashmir from which he drew influence to create and ornament his verses. Although his work may not incorporate the level of inwardness or theological reflection of Ratnākara or Abhinavagupta, he nonetheless is a part of this lineage of intellectual, Sanskritic Kashmiri *bhaktas*.

The pedagogical function of the *Devīstotra* is evident in the opening benediction and statements of the text. This section was likely composed by Yaśaskara himself rather than Ratnakaṇṭha, and it is the only instance in my reading of the text where the first-person voice is used:

*om śrīgaṇeśāya namaḥ | om namaḥ sarasvatyai |
 ratnākarābhyantarato grhītvālaṃkārasūtrāṇi yathākrameṇa |
 vandīva devyāḥ girirājaputryāḥ karomi śaṃsañchrutigocarāṇi |
 śrītrayīśvarātmajaśrīśobhākaramitraviracite 'laṃkāraratnākare 'laṃkārasūtrāṇi—*

Homage to Ganesh. Homage to Sarasvatī.

Understanding the *alaṃkāra sūtras* at the heart of the *Ratnākara* in accordance with their sequence, praising the Goddess, who is the daughter of the mountain, like a bard, I make

⁵⁰ David Buchta, “Pedagogical Poetry: Didactics and Devotion in Rūpa Gosvāmin’s *Stavamālā*,” (PhD diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2014), 7.

known the *alaṃkāra sūtras* in the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* written by Śobhākaramitra, son of Trayīśvara.”

In this statement Yaśaskara makes clear his desire to praise the Goddess, along with the goal of making the *sūtras* of the *Alaṃkāraratnākara* accessible to a much wider audience. The compound “śruti|gocarāṇi” can be translated in a more literal way as “in range of the ear,” which could potentially imply that he meant his verses to be repeated, recited, and passed on orally. The compact and relatively simple form of the *stotra* would certainly invite such a use. As mentioned above, the *DS* bears comparison to works of *śāstrakāvya* like that of Bhaṭṭi’s *Rāvaṇavadha* (The Killing of Rāvaṇa), better known as the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (*BhK*). Yaśaskara’s opening statement of intent is quite comparable to a statement of Bhaṭṭi’s in his own poem, that Yigal Bronner translates as:

For those whose eyes have been opened by grammar,
this work is like a lamp.
Those without grammar
will have to grope through it like the blind. (22.33)⁵¹

Here, Bhaṭṭi makes clear that at least one significant function of his poem is to elucidate central topics in Pāṇinian grammar, and to give examples in verse which readers can use as study aids to familiarize themselves with these rules, and to memorize. He also goes on to elucidate important poetic figures in his verses (especially in the 10th canto which depicts Hanuman’s burning of Laṅkā), as well as the use of various tenses and moods common in Sanskrit poetry.⁵² In many respects, as pedagogical poems the projects of Bhaṭṭi and Yaśaskara are quite similar. In his introduction to his translation of the *BhK*, Oliver Fallon writes that *śāstrakāvya* is not meant to be “a treatise written in verse” but is “an imaginative piece of literature which is also intended to

⁵¹ Bronner, Shulman, and Tubb, *Innovations and Turning Points*, 11.

⁵² Siegfried Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry: Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit*, in *A History of Indian Literature*, ed. Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 181.

be instructive in specific subjects.”⁵³ Like the *DS*, the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* is not limited by its pedagogical capacity; it is meant to be both a creative and original poem and a manual on poetics simultaneously. This two-fold aim of Bhaṭṭi, to write a poem retelling the deeds of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and to provide a toolbox of grammatical and aesthetic examples, naturally “limits his linguistic freedom to a considerable extent but also justifies his choice of unusual words and forms.”⁵⁴ In a footnote provided, Siegfried Lienhard gives the usage of *bhavatāt* (i.e., “let it” or “let there be”) as an example of an unusual or uncommon imperative form found in the text.⁵⁵ This usage is quite similar to Yaśaskara’s frequent uses of imperative forms of the verb √av, to protect or to favor: forms such as *avatāt*—“may [she] protect [you].” The tenth canto of the *BhK* commences with several *śabdālaṃkāras* (alliteration, *Yamakas*, etc.) one of which Oliver Fallon translates as,

raṇapaṇḍito ‘gryavibudhāripure kalahaṃ sa rāmamahitaḥ kṛtavān |

jvaladagni rāvaṇagrhaṃ ca balātkalahaṃsarāmamahitaḥ kṛtavān || (10.2)

That hostile expert in battle [Hanuman], honored by Rama, caused chaos in the city of the enemy of the foremost god and forcefully made Ravana’s palace, already beatified by flamingoes, blaze with fire.⁵⁶

This is an example of *Yamaka* (the repetition of syllables with different meaning), and looking at the Sanskrit transliteration, one can see that the second quarter of the verse is repeated at the end, but by breaking apart the syllables in a different way we arrive at another meaning. In the opening verses of this section of the *BhK* which abound with these types of *Yamaka*, Bhaṭṭi creates alliterative and original verse while at the same time systematically exemplifying various types of this *alaṃkāra*. One can compare these verses to the beginning of the *Devīstotra* in which Yaśaskara gives his own example of *Yamaka* along with examples of different types of

⁵³ Oliver Fallon, introduction to *Bhaṭṭi’s Poem: The Death of Rāvaṇa*. (New York: New York UP, 2009), xxxi.

⁵⁴ Lienhard, *A History of Classical Poetry*, 182.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 182, fn. 83.

⁵⁶ Fallon, *Bhaṭṭi’s Poem*, 224-25.

alliteration. It could be argued that Bhaṭṭi's verses show a higher level of sophistication in that he is sustaining a narrative while also exemplifying these *alaṃkāras*, whereas Yaśaskara merely creates individual and unconnected verses praising the Goddess. However, I would point to Yaśaskara's second verse, "May the goddess Kali, she who removes burning affliction like dark storm-clouds, she who is dark like a flock of cuckoos" etc., as an example of his own literary sophistication and creativity. Even if it does not form part of a sustained narrative, it is still alliterative and uniquely poetic. Also, the fact that it is a completely individual and autonomous verse may aid in its pedagogical role. It may be easier to remember one verse elucidating one specific *alaṃkāra* if a person does not have to worry about remembering its context and other important information outside of the verse itself. A verse as succinct and singular as Yaśaskara's could easily be memorized and disseminated widely among an audience. Bhaṭṭi also gives examples of *arthālaṃkāras* such as *Rūpaka*, *Utpreṣā* (metaphor and poetical fancy respectively), and others. One verse (using *Rūpaka*) translated by Fallon describes Hanuman as he returned home to Kiṣkindhā after the ravages of Laṅkā:

vraṇakandaralīnaśastrasarpaḥ prṭhuvakṣaḥsthalakarkaśorubhittiḥ |
cyutaśoṇitabaddhadhātūrāgaḥ śuśubhe vānarabhūdharas tadāsau || (10.26)

Then that mountain of a monkey was adorned with snakes which were the weapons hiding in the gorges of his wounds, with a rough broad cliff that was his broad chest, and with the redness of ores which was produced by his shed blood.⁵⁷

As before, this verse both exemplifies a specific poetic figure and is a work of well written poetry, much like Yaśaskara's own treatment of *Rūpaka* (The moon-face of Pārvatī affecting the tides in the mind-ocean of Śiva) translated previously. In both verses, there are multiple

⁵⁷ Fallon, *Bhaṭṭi's Poem*, 230-31.

examples of metaphoric identification at play that serve to educate students of poetry while also make good poetry itself.

Besides the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, another important point of comparison to the *DS*, especially regarding questions of pedagogical intent and audience, is the collected *stotras* of Appayya Dīkṣita, a prolific south Indian poet, philosopher, and theorist (1520-1592 CE). In his article “Singing to God, Educating the People,” Yigal Bronner states that until recently, *stotras* in academic research were typically viewed “as a form of direct communication between devotee and God, involving no third party.”⁵⁸ A large portion of the remainder of his article illustrates the numerous remarkable and original ways that Appayya’s *stotras* shatter this assumption. One such example is the prevalent use of self-authored auto-commentaries within his hymns. For example, in his *Śrīvaradarājastava*, Appayya describes the aspects and ornamented attire of Viṣṇu Varadrāja, a south Indian temple image of Viṣṇu, which doubles as a metapoetic commentary and explanation on the art of poetic ornamentation (*alaṃkāraśāstra*) itself. Specifically, as Bronner discusses, in his commentary on the first six verses of the text, Appayya identifies and explains twenty-seven poetic devices, referring to “a variety of texts and opinions, often quoting lengthy passages from *alaṃkāraśāstra* sources” which include numerous citations from “hot-off-the-press works written by Appayya himself.”⁵⁹ These citations include those from his *Kuvalayānanda* (a primer in Sanskrit poetics) and the *Citramīmāṃsā* (his most extensive work on poetics, left unfinished at the time of his death), two of the last and most famous works on Sanskrit poetics and literary theory in the premodern era. Bronner sees these self-written auto-commentaries as a new and original development of this period, and remarks that “at least some of Appayya’s *stotras* seem consciously to address a wider audience and serve

⁵⁸ Yigal Bronner, “Singing to God, Educating the People,” 115.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 122.

purposes other than those sought in direct communication with the divine.”⁶⁰ Appayya clearly used *stotras* to educate and inform his community of listeners on numerous topics which ranged even well beyond poetics, but why the use of *stotras* themselves? Bronner states that *stotras* commonly “are short and believed to be efficacious and hence quite likely to be memorized,” and these functional aspects “make *stotras* a uniquely effective format for spreading a message.”⁶¹ His pedagogical agenda is apparent in many other works, such as the *Kuvalayānanda*, but the brevity and directness of *stotras* made them a particularly useful vehicle. Bronner goes on to suggest that the “marketability and community appeal of *stotras* may explain, at least in part, the immense popularity of the genre” during this period (a period roughly contemporaneous with Yaśaskara and Ratnakaṇṭha in Kashmir).⁶² Although the fecundity and poetic abilities of Appayya Dīkṣita are on a plane with those of Abhinavagupta, his work is comparable to Yaśaskara’s in several ways. Yaśaskara did not author a self-commentary on his verses, but the added commentary from the *ARĀ* gives the text a much more explicit pedagogical function and a format similar to some of Appayya’s work. Ultimately, although Appayya lived and wrote in the southernmost regions of India and Yaśaskara lived in the far north, their works both belonged to a broad discussion of poetics and Sanskrit literature, and helped to illustrate the pan-Indian popularity and usefulness of the *stotra* genre.

As we have seen, the question of audience is central to understanding of the poetry of Bhaṭṭi, Appayya Dīkṣita, and Yaśaskara. Who would benefit most from hearing and receiving these poems, and put them to the best use; and were these audiences broad or quite specific? In a chapter of his dissertation on Rūpa Gosvāmin’s *Stavamālā*, David Buchta argues that while

⁶⁰ Bronner, “Singing to God, Educating the People,” 115.

⁶¹ Ibid., 128.

⁶² Ibid., 128.

“Rūpa’s model reader for these *stotras* would be amongst the Sanskrit-educated elite,” he also “seems to target a less restricted audience.”⁶³ I am not sure if this structure applies to Yaśaskara’s writings as well, but along with Appayya’s *stotras*, it serves as a useful point of comparison. Buchta describes the *Chando ’ṣṭādaśaka* (a retelling of Kṛṣṇa’s deeds in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* within the *Stavamālā*) as a sort of “intra-lingual translation” with a form that relies on “its minimization of the number of grammatical forms used, its heavy reliance on long compounds [which reduces the need for an extensive knowledge of the fine points of Sanskrit grammar and its numerous case endings], and its use of musical meters” in order to make itself available to a less specialized, and even less Sanskritized, audience.⁶⁴ In comparison, I think the *DS* has the goal of expanding the *alamkāra sūtras* of the *ARĀ* to a broader audience; Yaśaskara states as much in his introductory statement, but the style of Sanskrit used is unlike what Buchta describes in the *Chando ’ṣṭādaśaka*. I would say the same for the 10th canto of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*, although I would describe Bhaṭṭi’s Sanskrit as being somewhat more elegant than Yaśaskara’s. The instances in which both texts are heavily reliant on large compounds tend to fall in their earlier verses when the authors are explicating types of *Yamakas*, alliteration, or other *śabdālamkāras*. Rather than breaking up the syntax of the verse with individual parts of speech and case endings, the compounding of words allows for a more flexible metrical space to compose these *alamkāras* that are reliant on sound, syllables, and word appearances. Although the *DS* does generally use compounds, such an extensive use of it as in Rūpa Gosvāmin’s *stotra* is not the norm of the text. Also, as previously stated, both the *DS* and the *BhK* use uncommon forms of certain verbs (*bhavatāt*, *avatāt*, etc.) among other things, which lessens the grammatical simplicity of the text to a degree. However, once one becomes familiar with these forms and

⁶³ Buchta, “Pedagogical Poetry,” 185.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 226.

knows to look for them, they become less of an impediment to one's understanding of the text. Although the *DS* contains certain unique words and forms, I would say generally that the Sanskrit of Yaśaskara's verses is of a simple and straightforward variety like that of other *stotras*, and it is certainly more accessible than the technical *alaṃkāraśāstra* vocabulary and syntax of Śobhākaramitra's text. Ratnakaṇṭha's later decision to place the *sūtras* and other content from the *ARĀ* right along with Yaśaskara's verses foreground the role of the *DS* as a pedagogical text. In my view, the text was meant to support Śobhākaramitra's views on poetics, and was meant to educate students with a working knowledge of Sanskrit poetics (and especially that tradition within Kashmir) in general. I think the ideal audience of Yaśaskara's text would have had knowledge of Sanskrit, along with the elite backgrounds that tend to accompany that knowledge. If a priest or a singer thought Yaśaskara's verses musical enough, they would not be out of place at all being recited at a temple or a pilgrimage site, but at the same time I don't think that every listener in the vicinity would understand or appreciate the full import of every one of Yaśaskara's verses, such as the *Vakrokti* verses for example. I think the *Devīstotra* would serve as an important gateway to the study and appreciation of *alaṃkāras* and Sanskrit poetics more broadly, but at the same time, a certain level of refinement and competence in the Sanskrit language would be needed from its audience for a full appreciation of the text. To this end, I do not see the text reaching as broad of an audience as the *Chando'sṭādaśaka*, but at the same time I do not think that is its goal. The *Devīstotra* was meant to combine religious devotion and an accessible explication of the *alaṃkāras* of the *ARĀ*, which itself is a challenging task given that the author must compose readable and lyrical poetry on a specific religious subject (the goddess Pārvatī) while simultaneously illustrating clear examples of his predecessor's poetic ornaments. Along with the knowledge of Śāktism and *alaṃkāraśāstra* needed, this requires an ability to

make the complex simple within the above constraints in one or two short verses. Although I would say that Yaśaskara's success in this endeavor is somewhat inconsistent, some of his best verses are nonetheless highly thoughtful and refined, and are favorably comparable to Bhaṭṭi's own compositions. This ability to function as a piece of both devotional and pedagogical literature gives the *Devīstotra* a richness which it otherwise might not have, and makes it a worthy object of study in the disciplines of religion and poetics.

IV. Further Contexts and Conclusions: Premodern Kashmir and the “Death” of Sanskrit

In an influential and provocative article titled “The Death of Sanskrit” Sheldon Pollock argues that Sanskrit “as a communicative medium in contemporary India is completely denaturalized,” and that ultimately, “in some crucial way, Sanskrit is dead.”⁶⁵ Although he acknowledges that speaking of a language being “dead” can be misleading because “biologicistic or evolutionary beliefs about cultural change [are] deeply flawed,” he nonetheless argues that this “death” of Sanskrit is due to the death of *kāvya* (poetry), literary culture, and imagination, the communication of which “is hardly less valuable in itself than the communication of new information.”⁶⁶ He argues that a language’s ability to function as a vehicle for imagination, and for *new* imaginative creations, is “one crucial measure of its social energy.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, the vast and historic genre of *kāvya* “is itself often an argument about how language is to be used, indeed, about how life is to be lived.”⁶⁸ In the remainder of his article, Pollock examines four case studies in the Indian subcontinent in order to document and understand the death of Sanskrit, and especially Sanskrit literature, as a historical process. His article has generated numerous strong reactions, discussions, debates, and responses, some of which are done in the spirit of respectful and appreciative critical engagement and others less so. His article and subsequent responses are particularly relevant for this thesis because the first of his four case studies involves the cultural and political changes in Kashmir, and the decline of Sanskrit

⁶⁵ Pollock, “The Death of Sanskrit,” 393.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 393-394.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 394.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 394. Although much of Pollock’s article is a negative analysis, in a much broader sense I found this quote (perhaps unintentionally) to be a wide affirmation of the inherent value of literature, poetry, and literary creation itself, and its crucial importance as an object of study for scholars in various branches of the humanities. For both bygone and contemporary times, the study of literature, its reception, and history, is one of the most direct paths to understanding how people themselves existed, the raw content of their external and internal lives, and what they thought of these things and how they made sense of them. A language that no longer actively produces this type of literature would clearly be in grave trouble. What remains to be examined is whether or not Sanskrit completely ceased this production in the six centuries or so leading up to the modern era.

literature in this region in the times leading up to the modern era. It is important to understand Yaśaskara and the *Devīstotra*, Śobhākaramitra and the *Alaṃkāratnākara*, and numerous other literary figures and works I have quoted and discussed through the lens of this conversation.

In the beginning of his examination of Kashmir, Pollock describes a gathering of litterateurs in the year 1140 CE at the private residence of a court official named (aptly enough) Alaṃkāra to honor his brother and poet Maṅkha.⁶⁹ The gathering includes a number of important Kashmiri writers and scholars of the time, including Ruyyaka and others described in the last chapter of Maṅkha's poem, the *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita* (The Deeds of Śiva). What is noteworthy about this gathering of Sanskrit poets and theorists is that for Pollock "this particular generation [...]" turned out to be Kashmir's last," and that within fifty years of this gathering the courtly Sanskrit literary culture of Kashmir was gone, and the "vast repertory of Sanskrit literary forms [the vehicle for so much literary creation for so long] was reduced to the *stotra*."⁷⁰ Pollock even notes that Śobhākaramitra's own *ARĀ* was the last major work of literary theory to circulate widely outside of Kashmir at the end of the twelfth century. In the fifteenth century, when Sanskrit reemerged in Kashmir, it took on a vastly different form, in Pollock's view, compared to the language and culture of those gathered at Alaṃkāra's home in 1140. During this time, at the court of Sultan Zain-ul-‘ābidīn (1420-70), the poet Jonarāja composed the *Rājataranṅinī* (The River of Kings), which itself was a sort of continuation of Kalhaṇa's (c. 12th century) work of the same name. From Pollock's analysis, it is clear that what this work depicts is an acceleration of the undoing of what he calls the "courtly-civic ethos of Kashmir" and the dissolution of culture

⁶⁹ Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit," 395.

⁷⁰ This quote and a discussion of what follows can be found in Pollock, "The Death of Sanskrit," 396-400.

and political order in the region more generally (which was already taking place in the time of Mañkha and Kalhaṇa).⁷¹ Pollock further states:

One cannot read the account in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* without feeling numbed by the stories of impiety, violence, and treachery. [...] In such a world, [...] it would hardly be surprising if the court had ceased to command the sympathies of its subjects. [...] Royal power had become irrelevant not just to literature but to the literary culture of the time as well. Alaṅkāra's group, meeting at his home, [was itself] made up of scholars, literati, and local and foreign men of affairs—but no king.⁷²

It is clear from this account that an incredible socio-cultural breakdown had occurred, along with a potentially irrevocable fracture between royal/political and literary/cultural elites. Royal power was largely transferred by less than peaceful means, usurpation, war, insurrection, and the like, and those who held power rarely lasted for more than a few decades and showed little interest in the court or in wider Kashmiri culture. The kingship of Sultan Zain-ul-‘ābidīn, mentioned above, was one of the rare instances of anything resembling stability during this period. Thus, for Pollock, this disintegration (among other forces) had profoundly adverse effects on Sanskrit literary culture; curtailing its genres and modes of production until only the *stotra* was left, and diminishing a once fecund intellectual atmosphere, one of the envies of the entire subcontinent, to a “culture reduced to reinscription and restatement,” or as he says elsewhere, a culture where only the “dry sediment of religious hymnology remained.”⁷³ It is clear that for Pollock there was an important connection between socio-political upheaval and decay and the decline of Sanskrit literary culture in Kashmir, and that whatever literature in whichever genres remained were imperfect (at best) or wholly inadequate vehicles at worse for the continued life of the imagination in Sanskrit. The light of Sanskrit's social energy had long since burnt out, and the Goddess of learning, Śārādā, had long since departed.

⁷¹ Pollock, “The Death of Sanskrit,” 398.

⁷² Ibid., 399.

⁷³ Ibid., 398, 417.

—Or had she? Two important respondents to Pollock’s thesis, Jürgen Hanneder and Hamsa Stainton, have put forward arguments that expand our knowledge of literary Kashmir and complicate or even cast doubt upon some of Pollock’s main assertions. In his response article titled “On ‘The Death of Sanskrit’” Hanneder shows that Pollock uses the metaphor of “death” in two ways: firstly, since “death” can be defined as an absence of activity, Pollock’s “evidence is often negative [i.e.] Sanskrit is dead because no Sanskrit writings are known from a certain time in history,” and secondly, Pollock’s diagnosis often resembles more of a “clinical death” which “rests on the observation that during a specific time there was Sanskrit activity, but no real signs of life, as creativity and innovation.”⁷⁴ For Hanneder, although Pollock’s method of argumentation and his conclusions are thoughtful and suggestive, they are in many ways arbitrary. One example where Hanneder questions Pollock’s argumentation is his evaluation of the circulation and availability of Sanskrit manuscripts after the 12th century. Suffice it to say, in the three hundred years following this period there is no mention of new or significant works, nor are there any manuscripts widely circulated. However, Hanneder asserts that most manuscripts available for use today are “from a period *after* the supposed death of Sanskrit.”⁷⁵ (Although it is unknown when they were originally copied, the two *Devīstotra* manuscripts were collected and archived at the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute in the late 19th century.) A number of these contain *stotras*, ritual texts, simple textbooks, and other things, which Pollock interprets as evidence of a literary culture in decay left to rote repetition and restatement. However, for Hanneder these texts can simply show the presence of “an active Sanskrit training system rather than the [assumed] inability to write more advanced works.”⁷⁶ For Hanneder, it’s not necessarily

⁷⁴ Jürgen Hanneder, “On ‘The Death of Sanskrit,’” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 45, (2002): 293.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 298.

about which of these two assertions is true, the main point is that we need to be wary drawing such unambiguous conclusions as Pollock's from data that is incomplete or open to different interpretations. For my part I am in agreement with Hanneder's wider point, and I would add—considering the *Devīstotra* follows the model of *śāstrakāvya* and was written in this post-12th-century period—that the *DS* itself is a crucial piece of evidence supporting the possibility that such active systems of Sanskrit learning were still alive and operating during this time.

In a paper entitled “Beyond Death and Decay: Literary Innovation in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir” which he presented at the South Asia Conference hosted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in October of 2016, Hamsa Stainton discusses “The Death of Sanskrit,” its implications, and its challenges. Although he acknowledges Pollock's point that “there certainly was a contraction in the number of texts produced in [Kashmir] and the genres to which they belonged” during this period, there nonetheless were certain genres “that show *increased* creativity and vitality,” namely *stotra* literature.⁷⁷ Pollock argues that the ability to create *new* literature in Sanskrit was severely damaged, if not destroyed, during this period, however Stainton provides evidence in his readings of the *stotras* of Jagaddhara Bhaṭṭa (c. 14th century CE)⁷⁸ and others that challenge this assertion. Jagaddhara's *Stutikusumāñjali* for its part contains thirty-eight *stotra* and an additional poem which in total consists of almost 1,500 verses written in a number of different styles. For example, in his fifth *stotra* “Jagaddhara establishes the criteria by which poetry should be judged and lauds the greatness of poetry by praising the work of [prior] good poets, echoing earlier authors of classical Sanskrit *kāvya* like Maṅkha in his *Śrīkaṇṭhacarita*.”⁷⁹ It is noteworthy that Stainton sees profound resemblances between

⁷⁷ Hamsa Stainton, “Beyond Death and Decay: Literary Innovation in the Sanskrit Hymns of Kashmir,” (lecture, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, October 2016), 1.

⁷⁸ Stainton, “Poetry as Prayer,” 177.

⁷⁹ Stainton, “Beyond Death and Decay,” 4.

Jagaddhara's poetry and that of Mañkha, the very same figure for whom a number of Pollock's last generation of great Kashmiri poets and scholars gathered to honor in 1140. It appears we have come full circle, and, given Hamsa Stainton's translations and treatment of the *Stutikusumāñjali* in his work, it appears that the *stotra* genre "was uniquely able to accommodate great experimentation in content, form, and style," embodying what he calls "a creative consolidation of earlier traditions."⁸⁰ Jagaddhara and others were deliberately responsible for expanding "the possibilities and status of [the *stotra*] genre," and ultimately we cannot simply accept Pollock's assertion that these religious hymns merely represented the "dry sediment" of all that had previously washed away in the world of Kashmiri Sanskrit.⁸¹ They are instead a river of poetry, creativity, and innovation in their own right. While acknowledging Pollock's argument that there were incredible and disruptive changes in the Sanskrit literary culture in Kashmir, and certain forms of literature ceased to be productive, Stainton also asserts that "it is important to recognize multiple types of creativity as a measure of vitality," (or, put another way—to recognize the vitality of *stotras* as a measure of Sanskrit's enduring *social energy*) and that "innovation continued in Kashmir even after the 13th century."⁸² In his analysis of Kashmir, Sheldon Pollock in many respects focuses too narrowly on the preponderance (or lack thereof) of court poetry and works of literary theory alone, and misses the full impact of other genres. Although the *Devīstotra* is serviceable as a pedagogical tool, and may not reach the literary heights of Jagaddhara's work or the works of Abhinavagupta or Ratnākara, it nonetheless "creatively engag[es] with a literary past" with the purpose of developing a "vital literary future."⁸³ This literary past, as I have shown, consists of Śobhākaramitra's *ARĀ*, along with

⁸⁰ Stainton, "Beyond Death and Decay," 7.

⁸¹ Ibid., 7.

⁸² Ibid., 11.

⁸³ Ibid., 10.

wider devotional traditions and literatures surrounding the Goddess and the tradition of *sāstrakāvya*, specifically the *Bhaṭṭikāvya*. The *Devīstotra* is creative in the way it uses and interprets Śobhākaramitra's alaṃkāras as it blends these devices with imagery and mythology associated with Goddess traditions in Kashmir and the subcontinent. Just as many other *stotras* do, Yaśaskara's text encapsulates both a poem of devotion and a consciously multivalent literary work that intimately converses with and involves other genres of Sanskrit literature, whether it is philosophy, theology, earlier poetry, history, or literary theory. In and of itself, the *DS* is a testament to the richness and vitality of the *stotra* genre, and to the survival and even growth of Sanskrit in Kashmir during the premodern period.

In my reading of Sheldon Pollock's article and its responses, one final question has stuck with me which I will seek to address as a sort of conclusion. It is clear that as other genres of literature changed, diminished, or disappeared, *stotras* became a widespread and innovative genre, but *why* was this so? It would be important to begin to construct an account that addresses any social, cultural, or political forces could possibly illuminate this; namely, what might have brought *stotras* into favor and why they might have eclipsed other genres. Due to the paucity and inconsistency of records this may be a difficult task, but to step back and put myself in a poet's shoes (Yaśaskara's or another's perhaps), why write a *stotra*? In thinking of this I am brought back to Pollock's discussion of the *Rājatarāṅgīni*'s account of the dissolution of Kashmir's "courtly-civic ethos" and the treachery, violence, instability, and sometimes impotent kingships that plagued the region during this time. How might a poet react to this destabilization and decay around him, and how might he navigate a period with little to no royal support or patronage? It is clear from Pollock's assessment that what appears to be a largely irrevocable rift opened between the turbulent and largely short-lived Kashmiri royalties and the literary elite. However, with

regard to patronage and the *means* of becoming a poet and making a living as such, it appears that all was not lost. In the introduction to his translation of the *Dhvanyāloka*, Daniel H. H. Ingalls⁸⁴ states that although the withdrawal of court patronage prompted “court literature [to] virtually disappear from Kashmir during the tenth century,” the traditions of Sanskrit scholarship in Kashmir were not broken, and Brahmins in Kashmir “living in the capital or on their tax-free grants of land saw that their sons were taught Sanskrit grammar and the traditional Sanskrit sciences, in many cases teaching their sons themselves,” especially in Śaiva philosophy and literary criticism.⁸⁵ So, despite this violent instability a poet would still have the means to be so, but to the first part of my question, how might he find a *worthy* subject to write poetry about? I speculate that this contemporary social, political, and cultural decay could have an effect to repulse a poet witnessing such things, and would allow him space to explore and experiment with other subjects and literary genres. The *stotra* was one such genre that was flexible, popular, and efficacious enough to allow an author to creatively experiment. A loss of royal patronage would also necessitate a lack of direct obligations to the king, which would mean the freedom from being obliged to compose literature glorifying the king’s deeds and recounting his ancestry and family. It is then no coincidence that as the royal patronage that would have endowed it disappeared, the reservoir of court poetry dried up as well. Thinking back to Pollock’s article, it is also not coincidental that Mañkha’s major work being honored by his brother and fellow litterateurs at their gathering was a long epic poem narrating and celebrating the deeds of someone other than a Kashmiri king and his family. In this time and place, we are clearly at a far remove from the era of those such as Baṇa (7th century) and his composition of the *Harṣacarita*;

⁸⁴ Ingalls is quoted directly by Jürgen Hanneder and is drawn on indirectly by Sheldon Pollock in their respective articles.

⁸⁵ Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan, introduction to *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana*, 28-29.

a highly innovative prose-poem honoring the life and deeds of his friend and patron King Harṣa. On the one hand, a poet in Kashmir with no debts to the king and witnessing this level of decay around him could be compelled to write satire or explore other genres. However, he could also turn toward Divinity and religious devotion. Furthermore, the communities of Brahmin Sanskrit educators would have enabled the continuation of Sanskrit learning and composition. The prevalence of temple-centered groups would have provided social and economic opportunities for poets to write poems centered on these Gods and Goddesses. The composition of *stotra* literature would indeed provide a vital outlet for discussions “about how language is to be used,” as Pollock says above, and “how life is to be lived.” In this light, although Maṅkha himself is not a *stotra* writer, nor is he grouped with those poets, it strikes me as being far beyond coincidence that the subject of his poem (besides not being a contemporary king) is none other than Śiva himself. To me it is not so far-fetched to think that these contemporary events in Kashmir allowed for *stotras* and devotional literature to become popular textual genres and prevalent vehicles for newly imaginative works and literary experiments (along with Bronner’s reasons for the “marketability and community appeal” of *stotras* discussed above). I mean this more in the sense of historical speculation rather than a definitive account, but I think that it is entirely plausible that the destabilization of Kashmirian royalty and the decay of the social and literary systems this entity upheld may have directly help establish *stotra* literature (among other genres) as a new, central, and innovative genre of Sanskrit literature in Kashmir. At the same time, I do not mean to discount other factors, such as the rise of vernacular languages and the dissemination of *bhakti* literature in these languages throughout northern India and potentially into Kashmir. In light of this, I would see the *Devīstotra* as more than just a pedagogical tool and devotional poem; it would be in many respects a successful attempt by both Yaśaskara and subsequently

Ratnakarṇṭha to preserve and transmit the poetics of arguably the last major work of *alamkāraśāstra* produced in Kashmir during a time of great upheaval by means of short, detailed devotional verses. Thinking of other *stotra* writers and poets who were far more prolific and far more well-known than Yaśaskara, I wonder how we would view their works given these contexts. It is possible that without a rise in the popularity of *stotras* in Kashmir and elsewhere in India, much less experimentation and innovation in later Sanskrit would not have taken place. *Stotra* literature is an important link in the history of innovation in Sanskrit, and *stotras*, the *Devīstotra* especially, illustrate the importance of the relationship between devotional literature and pedagogy in the Sanskrit language.

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